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Committee for Programme and Coordination
Fifty-seventh session
Organizational session, 20 April 2017
Substantive session, 5-30 June 2017*
Item 2 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Annotated provisional agenda

Provisional agenda

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Programme questions:
   (a) Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019;
   (b) Evaluation.
4. Coordination questions:
   (a) Report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination;
   (b) New Partnership for Africa's Development.
5. Report(s) of the Joint Inspection Unit.
6. Provisional agenda for the fifty-eighth session.
7. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-seventh session.

* The dates for the substantive session are tentative.

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Annotations

1. Election of officers

At its twenty-fifth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination reaffirmed the decision made at its twenty-fourth session that the post of its Chair, as well as the other posts on the Bureau, should rotate annually among the regional groups and decided on the following pattern of rotation for the post of the Chair: (a) Group of African States; (b) Group of Eastern European States; (c) Group of Latin American and Caribbean States; (d) Group of Western European and other States; and (e) Group of Asia-Pacific States. The Committee also decided that each year the post of Rapporteur should be occupied by a member of the regional group that occupied the post of the Chair in the previous year.

At its fifty-seventh session, the Committee may wish to elect the Chair from the Group of Western European and other States, in accordance with the agreed pattern of rotation among regional groups, and the Rapporteur from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, the regional group that occupied the post of Chair of the Committee the previous year.

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Pursuant to paragraph 2 (e) of Economic and Social Council resolution 1979/41 and paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 34/50, the Committee submitted to the Council and the Assembly for their review the provisional agenda for its fifty-seventh session, together with the list of documentation requested.

In accordance with paragraph 6 of the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 2008 (LX), the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit concerning the economic, social and human rights programmes of the United Nations system, including the reports dealing with the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, shall be examined by the Committee, which shall report thereon to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. In its resolution 59/267, the Assembly invited the Committee, in performing its programmatic, coordination, monitoring and evaluation functions, as set out in its mandate, to consider relevant reports of the Unit. The Assembly, in its resolution 67/236, endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee contained in its report on its fifty-second session, including its recommendation that the Assembly urge the Unit to intensify its efforts to introduce to the Committee reports that are relevant to the function of the Committee, bearing in mind subparagraphs 4 (d) and (e) of article 11 of the statute of the Unit (A/67/16, para. 7). In that connection, the Committee will have before it for consideration under agenda 5, reports of the Unit which it had deferred from its fifty-sixth session.

Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 37/234, 38/227 A, 42/215, 53/207 and 70/8, attention is drawn to Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2016/6, which contains the approved Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the

Methods of Evaluation, effective as of 1 January 2016.[1] The revised Regulations and Rules under articles I to VI were issued pursuant to resolution 70/8, in which the Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, as contained in chapter II, section A, of its report on its fifty-fifth session (A/70/16), on the proposed revisions to the Regulations and Rules as submitted by the Secretary-General in his report (A/68/74 and Corr.1). No revisions were made to article VII, Evaluation, or the annex; consideration of which was deferred for action at the fifty-seventh session of the Committee (see below, section 3, Programme questions, subsection (a), Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019).

By its resolution 64/229, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and decided not to include the agenda item entitled "Improving the working methods and procedures of the Committee for Programme and Coordination" in future sessions, and further decided to discuss related matters under the agenda item entitled "Adoption of the agenda and organization of work" as and when needed.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat on the status of documentation for the fifty-seventh session (E/AC.51/2017/L.1)

Note by the Secretariat on the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (E/AC.51/2017/L.2)

3. Programme questions

(a) Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019

In its resolution 58/269 entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change", the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare, on a trial basis, for submission to the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, a strategic framework to replace the four-year medium-term plan, which would comprise, in one document:

(a) Part one: a plan outline, reflecting the longer-term objectives of the Organization;

(b) Part two: a biennial programme plan, to cover two years.

In its resolution 62/224, the General Assembly considered the recommendations of the Committee contained in chapter III, section A, of its report on its forty-seventh session (A/62/16), including the decision to maintain the strategic framework as the principal policy directive of the United Nations with effect from the biennium 2010-2011 and to continue to include part one, plan outline, in the strategic framework (A/62/16, subparas. 33 (a) and (b)). The Assembly also requested that the Secretary-General improve the format of part one and the reflection of the longer-term objectives therein (ibid., subpara. 33 (c)) and reaffirmed that the Committee should, in performing its programmatic role in the planning and budgeting process, continue to review the programmatic aspects of the

[1] Bulletin ST/SGB/2016/6 supersedes bulletin ST/SGB/2000/8.

new and/or revised mandates approved subsequent to the adoption of the biennial programme plan, as well as any differences that might arise between the biennial programme plan and the programmatic aspects of the proposed programme budget, in accordance with its terms of reference, the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation and the relevant resolutions of the Assembly (ibid., subpara. 33 (d)).

In paragraph 10 of the same resolution, the General Assembly recalled regulation 5.6 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, and reiterated that the Committee for Programme and Coordination should continue to perform its role in reviewing the strategic framework and recommend any necessary changes to the Economic and Social Council and the Assembly.

By its resolution 71/6, the General Assembly approved the proposed biennial programme plan for the period 2018-2019 (A/71/6/Rev.1) and decided on the priorities for the period 2018-2019, which would form the basis for the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019.

Regarding the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, in its resolution 70/8, the General Assembly endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee contained in its report on its fifty-fifth session (A/70/16), which, in addition to revisions to articles I to VI of the Regulations and Rules, included: (a) the deferral of consideration by the Committee of the proposed revisions to article VII, Evaluation, of the Regulations and Rules (see A/68/74 and Corr.1) to its fifty-seventh session; and (b) a request that the Secretary-General present proposals for further revisions to article VII and the annex to the Regulations and Rules, taking into account relevant resolutions of the Assembly.

Documentation

Biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2018-2019 (A/71/6/Rev.1)

Report of the Secretary-General: consolidated report on the changes to the biennial programme plan as reflected in the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 and the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 (A/72/__)

Relevant sections of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 (issued as fascicles)

Report of the Secretary-General on proposed revisions to article VII of and the annex to the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (A/72/__)

(b) Evaluation

In its resolution 62/224, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Committee at its forty-seventh session on improving the working methods

and procedures of the Committee within the framework of its mandate, whereby the Committee would consider in-depth and thematic evaluation reports, as well as the report on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives, in budget years, without prejudice to its consideration of evaluation reports in off-budget years, upon its request or that of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, taking into account rule 107.2 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

(i) Strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives

In accordance with regulation 7.4 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, the Committee will consider the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the evaluation role and the application of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives. In that regard, the attention of the Committee is drawn to the relevant sections of General Assembly resolutions 36/228 B, 37/234, 38/227 A and B, 42/215, 43/219, 44/194, 45/253, 51/219, 53/207, 55/234, 57/282, 59/275, 61/235, 64/229, 66/8, 68/20 and 70/8.

Documentation

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives (A/72/__)

(ii) Programme and thematic evaluations

In its resolution 70/8, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Committee at its fifty-fifth session (A/70/16), including: (a) selecting the programme evaluations of the Department of Political Affairs, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, substantive support and programme components of the executive direction and management components of the programme budget section on "Overall policymaking, direction and coordination": Executive Office of the Secretary-General, and the Offices of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Violence against Children, for consideration by the Committee at its fifty-seventh session, in 2017; and (b) considering the thematic evaluations on the work of the regional commissions (Economic Commission for Africa, ECE, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and ESCWA) based on the completed evaluations of each entity from 2015 to 2017.

In its resolution 71/6, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Committee at its fifty-sixth session (A/71/16), including that the Committee should defer consideration of the reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of recommendations on the programme evaluation of the United Nations Environment Programme (E/AC.51/2016/2) and of the implementation of recommendations on the programme evaluation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (E/AC.51/2016/3) to its fifty-seventh session.

Documentation

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on programme evaluation of the Department of Political Affairs (E/AC.51/2017/6)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on programme evaluation of the Economic Commission for Europe (E/AC.51/2017/5)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on programme evaluation of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (E/AC.51/2017/4)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on programme evaluation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (E/AC.51/2017/__)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on programme evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (E/AC.51/2017/__)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on programme evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (E/AC.51/2017/2)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on programme evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for 2017 (E/AC.51/2017/__)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on programme evaluation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (E/AC.51/2017/3)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on programme evaluation of the substantive support and programme components of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (E/AC.51/2017/__)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the thematic evaluation of the work of the regional commissions (E/AC.51/2017/__)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its fifty-third session on the programme evaluation of the United Nations Environment Programme (E/AC.51/2016/2)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its fifty-third session on the programme evaluation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (E/AC.51/2016/3)

4. Coordination questions

(a) Report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2008 (LX), the Committee will have before it the annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) for 2016.

In paragraph 8 of its resolution 71/6, the General Assembly endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee contained in chapter III, section A, of the report of the Committee on its fifty-sixth session (A/71/16), on the annual overview report of CEB for 2015. In its report, the Committee recommended that the Assembly take note of the annual overview report of CEB for 2015.

Documentation

Annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2016 (E/2017/__)

(b) New Partnership for Africa's Development

In its resolution 60/257, the General Assembly endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee contained in chapter IV, section B, of the report of the Committee on its forty-fifth session (A/60/16 and Corr.1), on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In paragraph 237 of the report, the Committee recommended that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to report to the Committee at its forty-sixth session, and annually thereafter, on the progress, including problems, obstacles and challenges, as well as the goals of the United Nations system, to be achieved in support of NEPAD.

In paragraph 8 of its resolution 71/6, the General Assembly endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee contained in chapter III, section B, of the report of the Committee on its fifty-sixth session (A/71/16) on United Nations system support for NEPAD. In its report, the Committee recommended that the Assembly endorse the conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraphs 112 to 121 of the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations system support for NEPAD (E/AC.51/2016/5), and request him to continue to include, in his future reports, detailed information relating to the possible outcomes of the achievement of NEPAD targets. The Committee also recommended, inter alia, that the Assembly reiterate its request to the organizations of the United Nations system to continue to promote greater coherence in their work in support of NEPAD, on the basis of the agreed clusters of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, and to continue to mainstream the special needs of Africa into all of the system's normative and operational activities, including the financing of programmes and projects, resource mobilization and humanitarian assistance. The Committee further recommended that the Assembly request the United Nations system to continue to: (a) coordinate closely with the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, as the technical body of the African Union, and other structures of the African Union Commission and the Partnership in order to support strategic plans of the African Union Commission and the 10-year implementation plan for Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want; (b) strengthen its support for the implementation of the NEPAD strategic plans and programmes in the context of the

Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement; and (c) take into consideration the views, comments and/or input of regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union, in policy formulations and decision-making, mainly in the areas of mediation, conflict prevention and peace and security, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and in full respect of the principles of ownership, impartiality and consent of the parties. The Committee recommended that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to ensure that activities under the United Nations system support for NEPAD in the areas of mediation and conflict prevention were harmonized and took into account existing mechanisms in the region and subregion, with a view to avoiding duplication and overlap, in accordance with the Charter and in full respect of the principles of ownership, impartiality and consent of the parties. The Committee also recommended that the reports of the Secretary-General on NEPAD continue to include information: (a) not only on seminars, workshops and meetings but also on other tangible actions and results in respect of United Nations system support for projects of the Partnership throughout Africa, while stressing that future reports should further enhance the focus on the impact, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, of the activities implemented by entities of the United Nations system in support of the Partnership, with regard to the resources; (b) on the activities undertaken by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in the areas of advocacy and analytical work, coherence and coordination and facilitation of intergovernmental deliberations relating to the provision of support by the United Nations system to the NEPAD agenda; and (c) on the activities undertaken to provide support to countries to address concerns regarding the protection of women and children, including from sexual violence. The need for United Nations entities to continue their efforts in support of the region to address new challenges relating to governance, extremism and terrorism, and those faced by young people, was emphasized, and the Committee recommended that the Secretary-General include information in that regard in his report. The important role played by the development of hard infrastructure in Africa, in particular energy, railways and highways, was recognized, and the Committee recommended that the Assembly reiterate its request to the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to mobilize United Nations system support in that area, in particular for the initiatives of the regional economic communities. The Committee also emphasized the need for the continued implementation of activities relating to the monitoring mechanism to review commitments towards Africa's development and recommended that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to ensure that future reports on NEPAD continue to provide information in that regard. It noted with concern the continued delay in the recruitment of personnel to implement the mandates related to the monitoring mechanism and recommended that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to take appropriate measures to ensure that all approved capacity in the Office of the Special Adviser would be recruited as a matter of priority and without further delay so as to avoid a negative impact on mandate delivery.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on United Nations system support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (E/AC.51/2017/__)

5. Report(s) of the Joint Inspection Unit

In chapter IV of the report of the Committee on its fifty-sixth session (A/71/16), the Committee decided to defer consideration to its fifty-seventh session of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system" (A/70/686) and the note by the Secretary-General transmitting his comments and those of CEB on that report (A/70/686/Add.1).

Documentation

Report(s) of the Joint Inspection Unit (see E/AC.51/2017/L.2)

6. Provisional agenda for the fifty-eighth session

Pursuant to paragraph 3 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1894 (LVII), the Committee will have before it the draft provisional agenda for its fifty-eighth session, with an indication of the documents to be submitted under each agenda item and the legislative authority for their preparation, in order to enable the Committee to consider those documents, their contribution to its work, their urgency and their relevance in the light of the current situation.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat on the provisional agenda and documentation for the fifty-eighth session of the Committee (E/AC.51/2017/L.3)

7. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-seventh session

The report of the Committee on its fifty-seventh session will be submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its coordination and management meeting to be held in July 2017 and to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

Documentation

Draft report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the work of its fifty-seventh session (E/AC.51/2017/L.4 and addenda)

Annex

Members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for 2017[a]

Membership in 2017	*Term expires on 31 December*[b]
Argentina	2018
Armenia	2017
Bangladesh	2019
Belarus	2017
Brazil	2017
Burkina Faso	2017
Cameroon	2017
China	2019
Cuba	2017
Egypt	2019
Equatorial Guinea	2017
Eritrea	2019
France	2018
Haiti	2019
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	2017
Iraq	2017
Italy	2017
Namibia	2017
Pakistan	2017
Peru	2018
Portugal	2017
Republic of Korea	2019
Russian Federation	2018
Saudi Arabia	2017
Senegal	2019

Membership in 2017	*Term expires on 31 December[a]*
Ukraine	2017
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	2017
United Republic of Tanzania	2018
United States of America	2017
Uruguay	2017
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	2017
Zimbabwe	2018

[a] The Economic and Social Council decided to further postpone the nomination to fill two outstanding vacancies in the Committee, both from Western European and other States and both for terms beginning on the date of election by the General Assembly: one for a term expiring on 31 December 2017 and one for a term expiring on 31 December 2018 (see Economic and Social Council decision 2016/201 D and General Assembly decision 71/414).

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Fifty-seventh session
Organizational session, 20 April 2017
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Programme questions: evaluation

Evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

Global conflicts have resulted in larger and more diverse displaced populations, which reached nearly 58 million worldwide by mid-2015. Since the founding of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950, its role has expanded to meet these challenges. While UNHCR has a refugee mandate, it also engages with internally displaced persons, for whom the State has primary responsibility, through an inter-agency framework.

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) examined the relevance and effectiveness of the engagement of UNHCR with and for refugees and internally displaced persons in "mixed settings" where both are present, within the overall implementation of its mandate. The evaluation focused on 21 mixed settings, and used surveys, interviews, on-site visits, focus groups, case studies, document reviews and secondary data analyses.

Despite an increase in refugees in more than half of the 21 mixed settings in the past three years, UNHCR provided critical assistance and protection activities, maintaining or increasing the percentage of refugees assisted in most settings. However, challenges remained in reaching out-of-camp refugees. Partners and staff generally rated UNHCR performance positively in most key refugee outcome areas. UNHCR consultation with refugees was also rated largely positively, but was less effective in communicating back to refugees regarding their concerns.

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Through the framework established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the role of UNHCR with regard to internally displaced persons in mixed settings has become more defined. Its decisions to engage with such persons have become more systematic, and its roles in leading coordination clusters are aligned with its perceived organizational strengths. However, within these cluster roles, the specific activities and level of engagement of UNHCR with internally displaced persons have varied at the country level.

Through its internally displaced persons coordination role, UNHCR has made positive contributions to the response to internally displaced persons globally, and a majority of external stakeholders and staff rated UNHCR positively on internally displaced persons coordination in mixed settings. However, variations in performance and complications in coordination were evident at the country level. Factors affecting coordination performance included resources, staff skills and dedicated cluster leads.

On the whole, the role of UNHCR with regard to internally displaced persons within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee system has not affected its broader mandated responsibilities for refugees in mixed settings. In a few cases in which it did, the effects were not entirely negative, and the effect of engagement with internally displaced persons on refugee coordination was also minimal.

As the number of refugees and internally displaced persons has continued to grow, contexts with mixed populations will continue to pose challenges to UNHCR and the humanitarian system as a whole. The present evaluation identified several system-wide issues that require further examination, including implementation of the 2014 joint note of UNHCR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on mixed situations.

OIOS makes three important recommendations to UNHCR:

(a) Improve country-level monitoring of out-of-camp refugees;

(b) Ensure consistent communication back to refugees on action taken in response to inputs;

(c) Develop country-specific coordination strategies.

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I. Introduction and objective

1. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) identified the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for evaluation on the basis of a risk assessment undertaken by OIOS to identify programme evaluation priorities. The Committee for Programme and Coordination selected the programme evaluation of UNHCR for consideration at its fifty-seventh session, to be held in June 2017 (see A/70/16). The General Assembly endorsed the selection in its resolution 70/8.

2. The general frame of reference for OIOS is set out in General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B, 54/244 and 59/272, as well as the Secretary-General's bulletin on the establishment of OIOS (ST/SGB/273), which authorizes OIOS to initiate, carry out and report on any action that it considers necessary to fulfil its responsibilities. Evaluation by OIOS is provided for in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (see ST/SGB/2016/6, regulation 7.1).

3. The overall objective of the evaluation was to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance and effectiveness of UNHCR engagement with and for refugees and internally displaced persons in mixed refugee and internally displaced persons settings, within the overall implementation of its mandate. The evaluation topic emerged from a programme level risk assessment described in the evaluation inception paper.[1] The evaluation has been conducted in conformity with the norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations system.[2]

4. Comments from the management of UNHCR were sought on the draft report and taken into account in the preparation of the final report. The formal UNHCR response is included in the annex to the present document.

II. Background

A. History and mandate

5. UNHCR was established by the General Assembly in its resolution 319 (IV) of 3 December 1949. Its mandate is defined in its Statute, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 428 (V) of 14 December 1950 (annex), as providing international protection to refugees and seeking permanent solutions to refugee problems, and was extended in 2003 "until the refugee problem is solved" (see A/67/6/Rev.1). The General Assembly also expanded the core mandate responsibilities of UNHCR to include stateless people. Furthermore, UNHCR has been invested with specific responsibilities in relation to internally displaced persons within a joint inter-agency approach.

[1] OIOS-Inspection and Evaluation Division inception paper: programme evaluation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, assignment No. IED-15-004 (26 June 2015).

[2] Issued by the United Nations Evaluation Group in 2005.

6. The overall objective of UNHCR is "to ensure international protection to refugees and others of concern to the Office of UNHCR and to seek permanent solutions to their problems in cooperation with States and other organizations, including through the provision of humanitarian assistance" (see A/67/6/Rev.1). Owing to recent crises, the number of displaced people defined as "of concern" to UNHCR has risen significantly, from 35.8 million in 2012 to 57.9 million in 2015.[3]

7. The primary instruments governing refugee rights and the legal framework underpinning the work of UNHCR are the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and the 1967 Protocol thereto, with 145 and 146 States parties, respectively.[4] For internally displaced persons, national authorities have the primary responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to displaced persons within their jurisdiction.

B. Structure and governance

8. UNHCR is headed by the High Commissioner, who is responsible for the direction of the organization, and is supported by a Deputy High Commissioner and two Assistant High Commissioners (one each for Operations and Protection).

9. The Office is governed by the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council and reports annually to both bodies. An executive committee, currently comprising 98 States, meets every October and approves the biennial programme and budget.

10. The headquarters of UNHCR are located primarily in Geneva. They comprise the Executive Office, seven Divisions and five regional bureaux (see A/AC.96/1125 and Corr.1), and its field operations are located in 456 locations in 126 countries.[5]

C. Global strategic priorities and results framework

11. The goals of UNHCR are articulated as global strategic priorities in its results framework and include:

(a) Favourable protection environment;

(b) Fair protection processes and documentation;

(c) Security from violence and exploitation;

(d) Basic needs and services;

(e) Community empowerment and self-reliance;

(f) Durable solutions;

(g) Emergency response.

[3] See "UNHCR mid-year trends 2015" (UNHCR, 2015), table 1, final row.
[4] As of April 2015.
[5] See *UNHCR Global Appeal 2016-2017*.

D. Persons of concern

12. The 57.9 million people under the mandate of UNHCR as at mid-2015, referred to as persons of concern, were categorized as follows (see table 1):

(a) Refugees: persons outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution or indiscriminate violence, and who require international protection;

(b) Asylum seekers: persons whose applications for asylum or refugee status are pending;

(c) Refugee returnees: persons of concern to UNHCR for a limited period after returning to their country of origin;

(d) Stateless persons: persons not considered nationals by any State;

(e) Internally displaced persons: persons forced to flee their home or place of habitual residence and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border;

(f) Internally displaced returnees: internally displaced persons protected and/or assisted by UNHCR who have returned to their place of origin.

Table 1
Populations of concern to regional bureaux of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015

(Millions)

	IDPs protected or assisted by UNHCR[a]	*Refugees and people in refugee-like situations*	*Persons under the statelessness mandate of UNHCR*	*Other populations of concern to UNHCR*[b]
Europe	2.6	3.5	0.6	..
Asia-Pacific	3.0	3.8	1.8	..
Americas	6.5	0.8	0.1	..
Africa	8.7	4.1	1.0	..
Middle East/North Africa	13.3	3.0	0.4	..
Total	**34.0**	**15.1**	**3.9**	**5.0**

Source: "UNHCR mid-year trends 2015".
Note: Total population of concern = 57.9m.
[a] Includes people in situations similar to those of internally displaced persons.
[b] Includes asylum seekers, internally displaced returnees and refugee returnees.

Resources of the Office

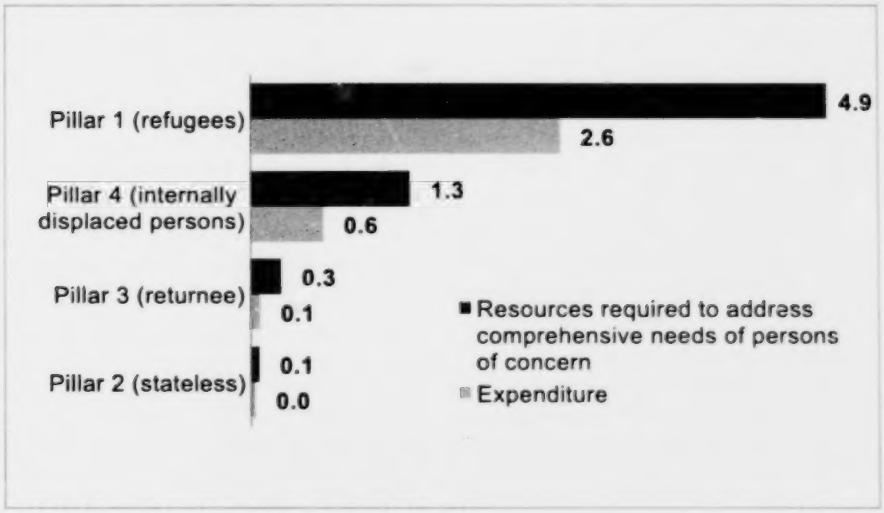
13. In 2014, the overall resources required for implementation of UNHCR activities were $6.6 billion, a 53 per cent increase from 2012. Actual income was $3.6 billion and actual expenditure was $3.4 billion in 2014. Less than 1 per cent of the budget of UNHCR comes from United Nations regular budget contributions; the

remaining 99 per cent is funded by voluntary contributions.[6] In 2015, UNHCR had 9,728 staff, 88 per cent of whom were based in field locations.[7]

14. The budget of UNHCR is divided into four pillars that correspond in part to the key groupings of persons of interest. Figure I shows the 2014 budget for addressing the comprehensive needs of persons of interest, as well as expenditure, by population type. Refugees represent the highest proportion, with 74 per cent of total requirements and 76 per cent of actual expenditure.

Figure I
Final budget and expenditure of the Office, by population type, 2014

(Billions of United States dollars)



Source: UNHCR Global Report 2014.

Engagement of the Office in mixed settings involving both refugees and internally displaced persons

15. In 1993, the General Assembly affirmed its support for UNHCR to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to internally displaced persons, "especially where such efforts could contribute to the prevention or solution of refugee problems". The Assembly defined the foundation for UNHCR engagement with internally displaced persons as being "on the basis of specific requests from the Secretary-General or the competent principal organs of the United Nations and with the consent of the concerned State".[8] It also set out criteria for such efforts, including that they "should not undermine the refugee mandate of the Office and the institution of asylum".[9]

[6] UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Report 2014* (2015), p. 135.
[7] UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2016-2017* (2015), p. 2.
[8] See General Assembly resolution 48/116, para. 12.
[9] See General Assembly resolution 69/152, para. 11.

16. In 1991, the General Assembly adopted resolution 46/182, creating an Inter-Agency Standing Committee, with an Emergency Relief Coordinator as Chair. In 2012, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated that resolution 46/182 gave the Emergency Relief Coordinator responsibility for "coordinating humanitarian assistance" in complex emergencies. In 2013, UNHCR stated that its own Statute put it "at the centre of the international refugee response system, including in respect of coordination functions". In 2014, responsibilities for both refugees and internally displaced persons overlapped in 14 mixed settings, with simultaneous United Nations responses with regard to both refugees and internally displaced persons. UNHCR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs attempted to clarify roles and responsibilities in their 2014 joint note on mixed situations and coordination in practice.

III. Methodology

17. The present evaluation examined the work of UNHCR in mixed settings, which involve both refugees and internally displaced persons and are defined as countries that hosted over 10,000 refugees and over 10,000 internally displaced persons concurrently as of 2014, whether or not UNHCR was engaged with the population of internally displaced persons. Twenty-one such mixed settings constituted the evaluation framework: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, India, Iraq, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Nepal, the Niger, Pakistan, Serbia, South Sudan, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda and Yemen. They accounted for 41 per cent of the 15 million refugees and 73 per cent of the 34 million internally displaced persons globally, and 48 and 82 per cent of the total expenditure of UNHCR for refugees and internally displaced persons, respectively, in 2014.

18. The present evaluation generally focused on the past three to four years. Its results are based on a triangulation of multiple data sources. The evaluation used the following combination of qualitative and quantitative data-collection methods:

(a) Missions to Geneva, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa, Goma, Bukavu and Uvira), Iraq (Erbil and Dohuk) and Mali (Bamako and Faragouaran), including visits to camps for persons and communities of concern, and direct observation of conditions, communications and UNHCR operations;

(b) A total of 151 semi-structured interviews, at headquarters and in the field, with UNHCR staff, partners, donors, Governments, refugees, internally displaced persons and other stakeholders;

(c) Web-based surveys of a non-random sample of UNHCR professional, substantive headquarters and field staff in the 21 mixed settings;[10] and a non-random sample of United Nations and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners in the 21 mixed settings, comprising operational partners, members of

[10] The staff survey was sent to a non-random sample of 1,407 staff; 398 staff responded (a 28 per cent response rate). Responses from staff in Lebanon and Turkey were dropped from country-level analyses but included for global-level analyses since they were not included in the final selection of 21 mixed settings.

UNHCR-led or co-led clusters, inter-cluster coordinators and humanitarian coordinators;[11]

(d) Thirteen focus group discussions with refugees and internally displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and Mali;

(e) In-depth case studies of 11 of the 21 mixed settings, using data from interviews, surveys, document reviews and secondary data sources,[12] along with cross-country comparison of results and contributing factors;

(f) Review of a selected sample of key documentation, including operational plans, internal directives and reports, global and operation-level coordination documents, and relevant evaluations;

(g) Analyses of UNHCR programme data, population and budget figures, and operation-level data from the Global Focus database of UNHCR.

19. The collection of data for the evaluation encountered three main limitations: the lack of consistent and comprehensive UNHCR monitoring and performance data, which limited cross-country comparisons; low rates of response to the staff and partner surveys; and identification of several issues related to system-wide coordination structures that were outside the scope of the evaluation.

20. OIOS consulted UNHCR during the conduct of the evaluation and expressed its gratitude for its cooperation and assistance.

IV. Evaluation results

A. The Office provided critical assistance and carried out protection activities for refugees in all mixed settings

21. Despite an increase in the number of refugees in more than half of the 21 mixed settings, UNHCR maintained or increased the percentage of refugees assisted in most of the settings during the past three to four years.

22. At the end of 2014, over 6.1 million refugees were present in 21 mixed settings,[13] reflecting an overall increase of nearly 1 million since 2012. During this three-year period, refugee numbers increased in more than half of the settings (13 out of 21), while remaining at a similar level in six settings and decreasing in two.

23. Responding to that challenge, UNHCR reported assisting a large majority (87 per cent) of the total refugee population in the 21 settings in 2014; the

[11] The partner survey was sent to a non-random sample of 1,362 partner staff; 276 responded (a 20 per cent response rate).

[12] The 11 case studies are of Afghanistan, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Pakistan, South Sudan, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. They were selected on the basis of (a) UNHCR engagement with internally displaced persons, (b) population and budget size, (c) geographical representation and (d) mix of coordination arrangements and varied displacement flows. Among the 10 mixed settings not selected as case studies are all six in which UNHCR is not engaged with internally displaced persons.

[13] Refugee population figures included in the present report are based on UNHCR data, which reflect some estimation. A 2015 report by Statistics Norway and UNHCR indicated that 23 per cent of refugee population data were either an estimation or a combination of estimation and registration (see E/CN.3/2015/9).

percentage of refugees assisted increased in six settings, remained at a similar level in 12 settings and decreased in three settings. UNHCR assisted between 88 and 100 per cent of refugees in 14 of the 21 settings, and between 61 and 74 per cent in two settings. The remaining five settings with assistance rates under 50 per cent included two settings where the national Government directly assisted certain refugee populations, two settings with widespread active conflicts that significantly limited humanitarian access and one setting with Government restrictions on access to a large refugee population. Table 2 below illustrates numbers and trends for refugee populations and UNHCR assistance, by mixed setting, over the past three years.

Table 2
Refugee numbers, trends and assistance provided by the Office in 21 mixed settings, 2012-2014

		Population (in thousands)		*Population assisted by UNHCR (percentage)*	
UNHCR engagement	*Operation*	*2014*	*Trend*	*2014*	*Trend*
Refugees and internally displaced persons	Afghanistan	300	↗	100	→
	Cameroon	264	↗	94	→
	Chad	453	↗	100	↗
	Iraq	271	↗	100	→
	Libya	28	↗	100[a]	→
	Niger	78	↗	100	→
	South Sudan	248	↗	100	→
	Syria	149	↘	17	→
	Yemen	258	↗	46	↘
	Burundi	53	↗	100	→
	Mali	15	→	100	↗
	Pakistan	1 506	→	100	→
	Serbia	44	→	18	↗
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	120	↗	74	↗
	Sudan	278	↗	88	↗
Refugees only	Bangladesh	232	→	14	↘
	Ethiopia	660	↗	100	→
	India	200	→	13	↗
	Kenya	551	→	100	→
	Nepal	38	↘	61	↘
	Uganda	386	↗	100	→
Total		**6 132**	↗	**87**	

Source: UNHCR "Global trends" and "Mid-year trends" publications.
[a] Based on mid-2015 data.

24. In 2014, 52 per cent of refugees in the 21 settings resided outside camps. UNHCR developed a policy of pursuing alternatives to camps, an acknowledgement that living in communities can provide greater opportunities for resilience, independence and normality.[14] While UNHCR has started to collect information on the implementation of this policy,[15] comprehensive, disaggregated data on UNHCR assistance to out-of-camp refugees are not available. Field visits illustrated challenges regarding coverage of non-camp refugees. In two settings visited where a majority of refugees resided outside camps, several partners and staff interviewed expressed the view that UNHCR assistance to non-camp refugees was a weakness; in one, UNHCR assistance was focused primarily on in-camp refugees, owing to access issues and funding shortages, while in the other, data from direct observation and focus groups indicated that refugees outside the camp had less reliable access to basic services than those who were in the camp.[16]

With the exception of achievement of durable solutions, partners and staff generally rated the performance of the Office positively

25. The four key refugee outcomes, as defined for the present evaluation, are:

(a) Safety from persecution and violence;

(b) Mitigation of other protection risks;

(c) Meeting of basic needs;

(d) Achievement of durable solutions.

26. As shown in figure II, partners and staff surveyed in all 21 settings had positive perspectives on the performance of UNHCR in protection. Protection work was also cited most frequently as the main success of UNHCR in the past three to four years by both partners and staff interviewed in field locations.

27. When rating the performance of UNHCR in meeting the basic needs of refugees, 57 per cent of partners said it was good or excellent, compared with 49 per cent of staff. Only one third of partners and staff surveyed had positive opinions of the performance of UNHCR with regard to durable solutions, in acknowledgement of the external challenges raised in the 2014-2015 OIOS evaluation of UNHCR (E/AC.51/2015/5).

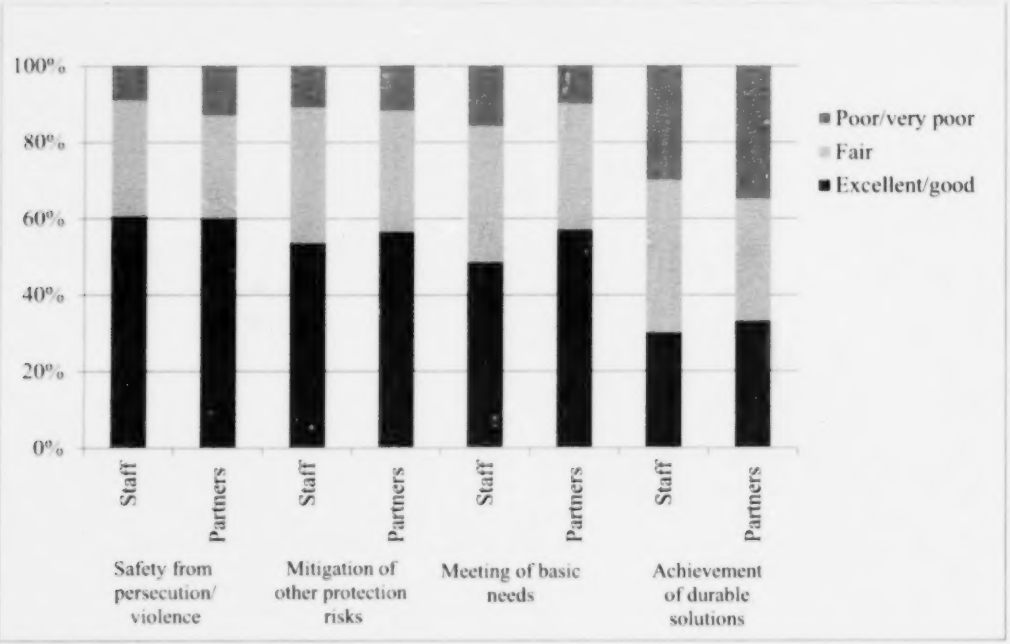
[14] See UNHCR, "UNHCR policy on alternatives to camps" (2014).

[15] See "UNHCR diagnostic tool for alternatives to camps: 2015 global results".

[16] In the third setting visited, all refugees were out of camp.

Figure II

Partner and staff ratings of the performance of the Office were largely similar



Source: OIOS staff and partner surveys.

Staff also reported that refugee outcomes had improved in two thirds of mixed settings

28. Staff in the 21 settings were surveyed for their perspectives on trends relating to each of the four key refugee outcomes, as influenced by both UNHCR performance and external factors. In 14 settings, staff noted positive trends over the past three to four years in at least three of the four refugee outcomes. The remaining seven settings, where staff did not report improvements, were characterized by severe operational challenges, including a high degree of insecurity and inaccessibility of refugee populations, political instability and/or restrictions by the host Government.

29. With regard to each outcome area, staff in 14 of the 21 settings reported that safety from persecution/violence and mitigation of other protection risks had improved in the past three to four years. Similarly, staff in 14 of the 21 settings reported that meeting basic needs had also improved. In relation to achievement of durable solutions for refugees, staff in 15 of the 21 settings reported that those outcomes had improved.

With respect to implementing participatory processes, consultation by the Office with refugees was generally good in the 21 mixed settings, despite challenges in managing the expectations of refugees

30. Operations of UNHCR are required to conduct participatory needs assessments to inform programme design and resource allocation in line with the age, gender and diversity approach and the accountability-to-affected-populations approach.[17] UNHCR has generally performed well in this regard. A review of 2014 reports on age, gender and diversity in the 21 mixed settings found that 19 of the settings had conducted formal participatory assessments using the age, gender and diversity approach, and that all of them reported having incorporated findings from the assessments in planning and programming for 2015. Participatory approaches varied across operations, including semi-structured dialogues with refugee women and men from different age groups in a few selected camps and consultations with refugees in both camp and non-camp settings. One operation focused its formal exercise on returnees and internally displaced persons. The two settings in which a formal exercise was not conducted were faced with significant security challenges in their countries of operation; one nevertheless reported promoting more informal participation by persons of concern in the planning process.

31. Forty-two per cent of field-based partners interviewed also expressed positive views on communications by UNHCR with persons of concern, compared with 15 per cent who said improvement was needed. In addition, a majority of field staff interviewed (70 per cent) expressed positive views on UNHCR communications with persons of concern, citing the participatory needs assessment and the age, gender and diversity approach, as well as other forms of regular communication, while 28 per cent said that it needed improvement. Field staff interviewed reported regularly using feedback from persons of concern to inform planning and programming. In at least four settings, including two visited by OIOS, UNHCR had moved to cash assistance programming for some refugee communities in response to input from persons of concern. In addition, OIOS observed a variety of channels through which refugees could express their needs directly or through implementing partners, including regular interactions with refugee committees selected for age and gender diversity.

32. Nevertheless, field visits revealed challenges faced by UNHCR and its partners in managing the expectations of persons of concern and in closing the feedback loop by communicating decisions made in response to their concerns. In focus groups conducted in the three missions visited, participating refugees expressed a high degree of dissatisfaction with the level of assistance provided by UNHCR and almost unanimously demanded far greater assistance from UNHCR. They also expressed frustration regarding the extent of their communications with UNHCR. Several partners and staff interviewed acknowledged that funding constraints might not have been adequately communicated to the target communities.

[17] See UNHCR, "Age, gender and diversity policy: working with people and communities for equality and protection".

B. The role of the Office with regard to internally displaced persons in mixed settings has become more defined, but its level of engagement remains variable

The parameters of engagement of the Office with internally displaced persons have become clearer through the cluster system

33. Unlike its clearly defined role and accountability with regard to refugees, the role of UNHCR with regard to internally displaced persons has varied over the past four decades. From the 1970s to the 1990s, decisions by UNHCR to engage with internally displaced persons were made on a case-by-case basis, according to General Assembly criteria, and at the discretion of UNHCR management. There was also variation in the sectors in which UNHCR engaged with internally displaced persons, including, for example, food, health and education.[18]

34. Nevertheless, UNHCR engagement with internally displaced persons now largely falls within the framework defined by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee cluster system, introduced in 2005 and further articulated under the Transformative Agenda in 2011.[19] Under this framework, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has assigned global cluster coordination leadership responsibilities to participating humanitarian agencies. UNHCR leads the global protection cluster and co-leads the clusters on (a) camp coordination and camp management and (b) emergency shelter and non-food items. Country-level clusters are activated on the basis of the needs and a set of criteria agreed through the Committee.

35. As a result, decisions by UNHCR to engage in situations involving internally displaced persons have become more systematic. This was reflected in headquarters staff interviews, during which the role of UNHCR in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee was most commonly cited as the main reason for UNHCR engagement. Nearly one third of headquarters staff who were interviewed also volunteered resource availability as a factor for engagement, as UNHCR funding of activities relating to internally displaced persons was project-based and earmarked for that population under its pillar budget structure. UNHCR has worked to clarify and further consolidate the legal basis and principles for engagement with internally displaced persons, most recently through issuance of a guidance note in 2014. It has stated that the intention for engagement with internally displaced persons is to "reinforce the complementarities and synergies between the work of UNHCR with refugees and the internally displaced".[20] In that guidance, UNHCR identified priority interventions with regard to internally displaced persons in line with its

[18] See "UNHCR's operational experience with internally displaced persons" (UNHCR, 1994); and "The protection of internally displaced persons and the role of UNHCR" (UNHCR, 2007).

[19] Transformative agenda actions are articulated in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's 2012 chapeau and compendium document and in protocols developed between 2013 and 2015. "Clusters" are coordination bodies designated by that Committee, made up of humanitarian organizations in the main sectors of humanitarian action. "Sectors" have similar functions but generally fall outside Committee frameworks and, for refugee response, are led by UNHCR.

[20] See UNHCR, "UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement: provisional guidance" (March 2014).

cluster commitments and results framework, which have become known as the "internally displaced persons footprint".[21]

36. Staff also reported that the clarity of the role of UNHCR with regard to internally displaced persons had improved. All headquarters staff interviewed who were asked about clarity said that the role had become clearer, although a few said that further improvements were needed. Most staff survey respondents reported that the role of UNHCR with regard to internally displaced persons globally had either become clearer or stayed the same in the past three to four years (43 and 37 per cent, respectively). Nineteen per cent, the bulk of whom were from 6 of the 21 settings, believed that it had become less clear.

There is broad alignment between the cluster leadership roles of the Office in response to internally displaced persons and its organizational strengths

37. The cluster leadership roles of UNHCR correspond to its comparative advantages. In particular, UNHCR leadership of the global protection cluster and of country-level protection clusters aligns with the fact that protection expertise was the most commonly cited unique value of UNHCR, as volunteered by one third of all partners and staff interviewed. The second and third most volunteered areas of valued added by UNHCR, by all interview respondents, were its emergency response capacity and its technical expertise in areas such as shelter and camp management. Partner survey respondents also most frequently mentioned UNHCR coordination and/or partnerships, and protection expertise and capacity, as its unique strengths in working with internally displaced persons.

38. Sixty-eight per cent of partners surveyed said that UNHCR was playing the right role overall with internally displaced persons. Those who did not think that UNHCR was playing the right role focused on deficiencies in coordination and insufficient engagement with internally displaced persons — indicating that negative responses were related more to the performance of UNHCR than to its role.

The Office's leadership arrangements and expenditure for internally displaced persons in mixed settings have broadly fallen within its defined cluster responsibilities and organizational objectives

39. UNHCR country-level leadership arrangements generally reflect its global coordination roles. As shown in figure III, UNHCR leads or co-leads the protection cluster or sector in all 11 case studies. It leads or co-leads the cluster on shelter and non-food items in 8 of 10 cases in which the cluster is active and leads or co-leads camp coordination and camp management in all seven cases in which the cluster is active. In 2 of the 11 cases, the engagement of UNHCR goes beyond these three clusters in response to local needs and its own capacity: it co-leads the return, recovery and reintegration sector in the Sudan and the cash working group in Iraq.

[21] UNHCR subsequently issued the Operational Guidelines for UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement in January 2016.

Figure III

The role of the Office in national-level response coordination mechanisms relating to internally displaced persons in mixed settings largely corresponded to its global roles

	Protection	Shelter	Non-food items	Camp coordination and camp management	Other
Afghanistan	Cluster co-lead	Cluster co-lead		N/A	Multisector lead
Cameroon	Sector co-lead	N/A			Multisector lead
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Cluster lead	[illegible]		Working group co-lead	
Iraq	Cluster co-lead	Cluster co-lead		Cluster co-lead	Cash working group lead
Libya	Sector lead	Sector lead		N/A	
Mali	Cluster lead	Cluster lead			
Pakistan	Cluster lead	Cluster lead		Cluster lead	
South Sudan	Cluster co-lead	[illegible]		Cluster co-lead	
Sudan	Sector lead	Sector lead		N/A	Return, reintegration and recovery co-lead
Syrian Arab Republic	Sector lead	Sector co-lead		Sector lead	
Yemen	Cluster lead	Cluster lead			

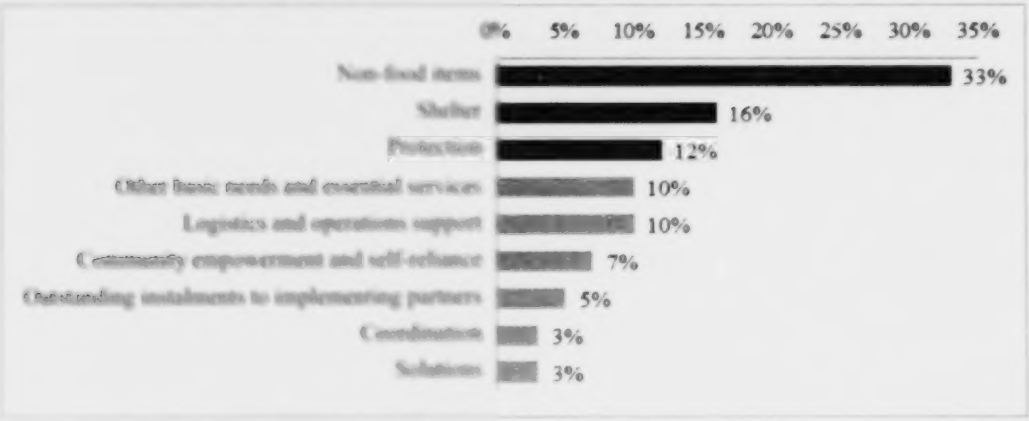
Source: OIOS compilation of interviews, humanitarian response plans and country-level coordination documents.
Abbreviations: N/A, not applicable.

40. Spending figures with regard to internally displaced persons, broken down by sector, also reflect the focus of UNHCR on its cluster area responsibilities in mixed settings. As figure IV shows, the three sectors with the highest expenditure during the period 2012-2014 were non-food items (33 per cent of total spending on internally displaced persons), shelter (16 per cent) and protection (12 per cent), which aligns with its three cluster lead responsibilities. The additional spending categories, including coordination, may also have cluster-related spending.

Figure IV

Spending by the Office on internally displaced persons, by sector, in 21 mixed settings[a] between 2012-2014 was concentrated in its cluster leadership areas

(Sector as a percentage of total internally displaced persons expenditure)



Source: UNHCR Management Systems Renewal Project data.

[a] Includes expenditure for operations in 21 mixed settings: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, India, Iraq, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Nepal, the Niger, Pakistan, Serbia, South Sudan, the Sudan (including the Sudan common humanitarian pipeline), the Syrian Arab Republic (including the office of the regional refugee coordinator for Syrian refugees in Amman), Uganda and Yemen.

However, within its cluster roles, the specific activities and level of involvement of the Office with internally displaced persons have varied at the country level

41. Analysis of the "internally displaced persons footprint" reveals that the activities of UNHCR with regard to internally displaced persons broadly fall within its cluster areas. UNHCR analysed 2016 country-level plans according to the priority interventions articulated in its 2014 guidance note on engagement with internally displaced persons. Seven of the 21 mixed settings had completed the footprint dashboard exercise; in those seven settings, 80 per cent of activities relating to internally displaced persons had fallen within the footprint. For the 20 per cent of activities that fell outside the footprint, about half were still within cluster areas but outside the determined priority areas of UNHCR.[22]

42. Nevertheless, within these broad cluster areas, the 11 country case studies showed significant variation in the specific activities relating to internally displaced persons that had been undertaken by UNHCR. This is appropriate when done in response to the needs of the local context, which was the case in some settings; in others, variations were more problematic. In one setting with significant protection concerns, protection coordination activities were limited largely to convening meetings and coordinating protection monitoring, whereas in other settings this function encompassed thorough needs assessments, 3/4 W mapping[23] and

[22] OIOS analysis based on seven country-level footprint dashboards concerning internally displaced persons (UNHCR, 2015).

[23] 3W means "who, what, where" mapping of cluster member activities; 4W includes "when."

fundraising to fill assistance gaps. Furthermore, the cross-cutting nature of protection has lent itself to varied interpretations of what constitutes protection interventions. The comprehensive nature of camp coordination and camp management and shelter has also highlighted the interconnected nature of the clusters that UNHCR leads or co-leads. For example, in one context, shelter cluster members expressed frustration with lack of progress in the water, sanitation and hygiene cluster, which had led to delays in shelter activities and discussions on whether UNHCR should be involved in the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene. Although the global clusters provide guidance and terms of reference for coordinators,[24] actual application in the field can be inconsistent — an issue noted by some staff and partners interviewed in 5 of the 11 case studies.

C. Through its coordination role, the Office has made positive contributions to response to internally displaced persons in mixed settings, despite some complications at the country level

A majority of external stakeholders and staff rated the Office positively on coordination with regard to internally displaced persons in mixed settings, although variations in performance were evident at the country level

43. Although Governments have the primary responsibility for assisting and protecting internally displaced persons, the humanitarian system plays a key role in crisis response when the capacities of Governments are inadequate or when Governments are contributors to the crisis. Unlike its accountability for refugees, UNHCR is a contributor to a collective response with regard to internally displaced persons. Assessing this contribution thus requires focusing on its coordination role and operational activities.

44. A majority of UNHCR partners surveyed rated its coordination performance with regard to internally displaced persons positively. Sixty-one per cent said that the contributions of UNHCR had contributed to better results achieved for internally displaced persons in their countries of operation, and most also rated its performance positively in several key areas, as shown in table 3.

Table 3
Partner ratings of UNHCR partnerships were largely positive

Partnership area	*Excellent or good rating (percentage)*
Partner's overall partnership with UNHCR	63
UNHCR understanding of partner work and expertise	65
UNHCR information-sharing with partners	66
UNHCR contribution to the coordinated planning of activities related to internally displaced persons	67
UNHCR consultations with partners on changes to its response to internally displaced persons	70

Source: OIOS partner survey.

[24] Global protection cluster terms of reference, camp coordination and camp management toolkit and shelter coordinator toolkit.

45. Among staff surveyed, a small majority rated UNHCR positively in its coordination of protection work, shelter, and camp coordination and camp management (58, 54 and 53 per cent respectively) but noted that there was room for improvement in "mitigating other protection risks for internally displaced persons", with 58 per cent rating UNHCR coordination performance in that area as poor.

46. Field-based partners and staff interviewed had similar views of UNHCR partnerships relating to response to internally displaced persons, with most stating that it was positive overall — three times more than those who said it was negative. They most frequently noted the leadership of UNHCR of the protection cluster and information-sharing as strengths. However, reflecting the varied nature of partner perspectives, field-based partners interviewed also most commonly cited UNHCR leadership of the protection cluster as a weakness.

47. In 6 of the 11 case studies, UNHCR performance relating to coordination of internally displaced persons worked well overall. Nevertheless, partners and staff reported performance variations over time, among sectors or within the country. In one case, while several interviewees noted effective coordination at the capital level, others in a field location expressed frustrations with UNHCR protection coordination, particularly in information-sharing. In another case that headquarters interviewees perceived as problematic, field-level interviews reported a high degree of functionality of clusters led or co-led by UNHCR at the working level, despite initial problems.

48. In protection coordination in particular, an independent whole-of-system review of protection noted mixed results. While the review encompassed both mixed and non-mixed settings, it found inconsistent performance in protection clusters, stating that "The performance of the protection clusters can vary significantly, both within a country and also across different contexts … In some contexts, the protection cluster is where strategies are developed; in others, it operates primarily as an information-sharing platform and [is] not where strategic decisions are made".[25]

49. As with refugees, UNHCR engagement with internally displaced persons was stronger with camp-based populations, although the vast majority of internally displaced persons do not reside in camps.[26] One of the areas it co-leads (camp coordination and camp management) relates mostly to camps. The amount of shelter work undertaken outside camps is difficult to quantify, as consistent data on assistance to out-of-camp internally displaced persons are unavailable. A 2013 study by the Brookings Institution noted that data on non-camp populations of internally displaced persons are inadequate, complicating assistance delivery.[27] Lower levels of assistance to out-of-camp populations were also observed during two of the three field missions, and noted during focus group discussions with internally displaced persons in these locations. Whereas in some case studies, access to national systems

[25] See Norah Niland and others, "Independent whole of system review of protection in the context of humanitarian action" (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2015), chap. 7.2.

[26] UNHCR does not officially estimate populations of out-of-camp internally displaced persons, but OIOS calculations based on data from "UNHCR global trends: forced displacement in 2014" estimate that approximately 99 per cent of non-refugee persons resided outside camps in 2014.

[27] See "Under the radar: internally displaced persons in non-camp settings" (Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, 2013).

meant that less outside assistance was required, in others there were significant assistance gaps for internally displaced persons, either in sectors such as shelter or in geographical areas with limited humanitarian access.

Tensions with partners were present in some settings with refugees and internally displaced persons in the same geographic area

50. There is some lack of clarity regarding which entity should play the lead agency role for refugees in mixed settings where refugees and internally displaced persons are in the same geographic area, which has led to some complications in coordination. In 2014, UNHCR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs signed the joint note on mixed situations and coordination in practice to "simplify and streamline leadership and coordination arrangements in a complex emergency or natural disaster where a Humanitarian Coordinator has been appointed, and a UNHCR-led refugee operation is also under way". The agreement stipulates that "where refugees are present in the same geographic area as internally displaced persons", operational coordination and delivery for both populations should be merged into a single structure under either UNHCR sectors or Inter-Agency Standing Committee clusters, but does not specify which should apply in any given case. The Emergency Relief Coordinator is mandated to coordinate with humanitarian partners "in full respect of their mandates", meaning that solutions should not be unilaterally imposed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator.[28]

51. Throughout all six case studies involving refugees and internally displaced persons in the same geographic area, UNHCR retained the lead agency role for refugees and chose to maintain separate, parallel refugee coordination arrangements in four of the six case studies. Its fundraising for refugees also remained largely separate.[29] Some humanitarian partners perceived the autonomous approach of UNHCR to refugee coordination as uncompromising, leading to tensions with contiguous populations in three of the cases studied. Moreover, partners and staff in some cases noted inefficiencies caused by parallel fundraising and reporting processes between UNHCR and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. In another case, cooperation with partners was hindered by a disagreement over whether sectors or clusters should apply to refugee response.

Factors that contributed to good coordination by the Office in mixed settings included adequate resources, staff skills and dedicated cluster leads

52. Three factors were most commonly noted by partners and staff interviewed at headquarters and in the field as contributing to well-functioning coordination. Field-based respondents most frequently cited the level and availability of coordination resources as the main factor contributing to better coordination. The second most commonly cited factor was the existence of the right skill set. In all three field missions, as well as in four other country cases, ratings of the coordination performance of UNHCR were attributed at least in part to specific coordinators and

[28] See General Assembly resolution 46/182.

[29] Appeals for refugees by UNHCR fed into independently budgeted global appeals. These were included in annual Inter-Agency Standing Committee joint appeals in 11 case studies, but in 10 of those UNHCR maintained a separate chapter for refugees. UNHCR is authorized by ExCom to raise funds independently (see www.unhcr.org/3ae69ef30.html).

their skills in leading and facilitating cluster goals. The UNHCR learning centre has developed a course on coordination, although only about 60 per cent of current coordinators have attended it. High turnover has also made it challenging to consistently deploy staff with strong coordination skills. The third factor, related to resources, was a dedicated cluster coordinator. In 5 of the 11 case studies, interviewees noted improvements in coordination with the appointment of dedicated cluster coordinators, rather than "double-hatted" cluster coordinators who also held roles and responsibilities within the UNHCR country office. Several partners and staff involved in coordination in those contexts also noted that having dedicated cluster roles reduced perceived or actual conflicts of interest between representing UNHCR and representing cluster needs.

D. On the whole, involvement of the Office with internally displaced persons has not negatively affected its refugee work in mixed settings

53. The General Assembly emphasized that the work of UNHCR related to internally displaced persons "should not undermine the refugee mandate of the Office". OIOS assessed whether involvement with internally displaced persons had negatively affected the refugee work of UNCHR, specifically its ability to facilitate protection of and provide assistance to refugees and to effectively coordinate refugee responses.

Involvement of the Office with internally displaced persons in mixed settings has largely had no discernible effect on its refugee protection and assistance work

54. For the most part, the involvement of UNHCR with internally displaced persons in mixed settings did not appear to affect its refugee protection and assistance work. Globally, one third of external stakeholders interviewed claimed that there was no overall impact of that work on the refugee mandate of UNHCR, with some stating that this was a result of the prioritization by UNHCR of refugees. Among UNHCR staff surveyed about mixed settings where they had most recently worked, 48 per cent claimed UNHCR involvement with internally displaced persons had had no overall impact on its ability to achieve refugee protection/assistance outcomes in the past three to four years. In 7 of the 11 case studies, OIOS assessments found no evidence that involvement with internally displaced persons in recent years had had an impact on the ability of UNHCR to facilitate refugee protection or provide refugee assistance. Among these seven case studies, responses to either refugees or internally displaced persons were geographically distinct (operating independently with mostly separate financing), or refugees were categorically prioritized by UNHCR.

Involvement of the Office with internally displaced persons affected its refugee work in some cases, although the effects were not entirely negative

55. In 4 of 11 case studies, evidence indicated that the involvement of UNHCR with internally displaced persons had affected its refugee work. In one case, negative perceptions by the Government of the protection activities of UNHCR with regard to internally displaced persons, and the resulting restrictions on its field presence, had adversely affected its ability to respond effectively to a refugee

emergency. In the three other cases, influxes of internally displaced persons had created resource trade-offs that had constrained refugee operations. Overall, resource trade-offs were the effect on refugee work of responses to internally displaced persons that was most cited by interviewed staff. In these three cases, the number of internally displaced persons protected and assisted by UNHCR more than tripled between 2013 and 2014, from 1.9 million to 6.5 million, and spending rose from $68 million to $263 million. Meanwhile, UNHCR spending on refugee activities in those operations declined by a quarter, to $239 million, from 2013 to 2014, despite an increase in the number of refugees receiving assistance. These implied reductions in spending per refugee included cuts of between 21 and 57 per cent to basic needs and essential services, mainly in the provision of shelter and non-food items.[30] Nevertheless, in all three, refugee operations had been established for more than two years, which limited the relative impact of 2014 spending cuts.

56. Nevertheless, in these three case studies, assistance to internally displaced persons also enhanced refugee protection. In two cases, staff noted that narrowing the gap between UNHCR assistance to refugees and to internally displaced persons had helped reduce threats to refugees from inter-group tensions resulting from perceived disparities in assistance between the two groups.[31] In the third case, assistance provided by UNHCR to internally displaced persons had had a positive impact on refugee protection, by improving the relevance of UNHCR to the host Government and enabling it to successfully advocate enhanced refugee protection space.

Involvement of the Office with internally displaced persons had a minimal negative effect on its coordination of refugee responses in mixed settings

57. UNHCR coordination of refugee responses in mixed settings has been largely effective. Most operating partners surveyed (65 per cent) rated its coordination of refugee activities in mixed situations as good or excellent, compared with 14 per cent who rated it as poor or very poor. This overall ratio was mirrored in 10 of the 14 mixed settings where UNHCR is involved with both refugees and internally displaced persons. Moreover, in 7 of the 11 case studies, operating partners and UNHCR staff reported consistently unproblematic refugee coordination. The other four case studies contained episodes of problematic coordination that were usually confined to initial phases of the refugee response and had mostly been resolved at the time of data collection.[32]

58. Two key underlying factors supported UNHCR in effectively coordinating refugee responses: the clarity of its mandate and its ability to mobilize resources for refugees. Drawing on its mandate, UNHCR acted as lead agency for refugee responses in all 11 case studies. The needs-based approach of UNHCR to planning and budgeting[33] also helped to ensure the financing of refugee responses throughout

[30] Basic needs and essential services include water, shelter, food, water, sanitation and hygiene, health care, non-food items, energy and education.

[31] This risk was noted by staff in five out of six case studies with contiguous populations of refugees and internally displaced persons.

[32] These included the failure of UNHCR to lead technical sectors effectively, confusion about roles and leadership constraints resulting from a lack of direct access to refugee locations. In all four cases, initial delivery of refugee assistance was adversely affected.

[33] Started in 2010.

the cases studied. This contrasts with the resource-based approach used in consolidated appeals processes for all United Nations planning and budgeting for internally displaced persons.

V. Conclusion

59. As the number of refugees and internally displaced persons has continued to grow, contexts with mixed flows of refugees and internally displaced persons will continue to pose challenges to UNHCR and the humanitarian system as a whole. UNHCR has retained its primary responsibility for refugees in accordance with its mandate, while contributing to response to internally displaced persons through coordination roles aligned with its core organizational strengths. Its more focused engagement with internally displaced persons has not had a negative impact on its ability to deliver on its core refugee mandate.

60. The interconnected nature of this system means that the results identified in the present evaluation have system-wide implications, a point raised frequently by evaluation respondents. As internally displaced persons are nationals of their State, humanitarian agencies cannot assume or adopt accountability in the same way that UNHCR has accountability for refugees. This lack of accountability is problematic when clusters assume responsibility for delivering in accordance with a humanitarian response plan. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has attempted to address this through its efforts relating to accountability to affected populations and by assigning "provider of last resort" functions to cluster lead agencies, which are defined as follows:

> Depending on access, security and availability of funding, the cluster lead ... must be ready to ensure the provision of services required to fulfil crucial gaps identified by the cluster and reflected in the Humanitarian Response Plan [led by the Humanitarian Coordinator].[34]

61. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee recognizes that even this level of accountability is more complex, with cross-cutting sectors such as protection and camp coordination and camp management, and notes that "sector leads are responsible for ensuring that wherever there are significant gaps in the humanitarian response they continue advocacy efforts and explain the constraints to stakeholders".[35]

62. The marked contrast between the clear mandate and responsibility of UNHCR for refugees versus a system in which there is no clear non-State responsibility for internally displaced persons lies at the heart of the tensions and varied effectiveness in some mixed settings. UNHCR defends its prioritization of refugees owing to its mandate and notes that refugee status itself is a vulnerability and protection risk that internally displaced persons do not face. However in some contexts, internally displaced persons increasingly face protection risks similar to those faced by refugees, who at times occupy the same geographical areas.

[34] See "Reference module for cluster coordination at country level" (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2015), sect. 3.

[35] See guidance note on using the cluster approach to strengthen humanitarian response (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2006).

63. The present evaluation identified several system-wide issues beyond the scope of the evaluation that require further examination. Among them are the application of the joint note, including factors determining which agency will lead merged coordination structures, and analysis of whether merged or parallel structures result in better outcomes for persons of concern. Agreements on responsibility for data collection and population estimates of internally displaced persons also require system-wide reflection, as do discussions on budget approaches. As needs-based budgets have enabled UNHCR to gain a more comprehensive picture of refugee needs, inter-agency discussions on whether to systematically adopt similar budget systems for internally displaced persons may lead to more harmonized approaches. A more comprehensive system-wide humanitarian response will become more critical as population numbers and access constraints increase.

64. UNHCR can make adjustments to improve its contributions and to advocate with partners for more effective coordination, but it is one player in a much larger system that comprises other United Nations agencies, international and local NGOs, donors, States and persons of concern. Ensuring that the needs and inputs of affected populations are incorporated into planning and response on a broad-based level will be the main challenge for all contributing partners, but one in which UNHCR, with its global leadership and expertise in displacement, can play a guiding role.

VI. Recommendations

65. OIOS makes three important recommendations to UNHCR.

Recommendation 1 (result A)

66. Within and between mixed settings, there are differences in the extent and quality of data collected, particularly between refugees in camps and those outside camps. **To address this, UNHCR should improve country-level monitoring through strengthening efforts to collect data on out-of-camp refugees, including on assistance provided by UNHCR.**

Recommendation 2 (result A)

67. In line with the policy objective of accountability to affected populations, UNHCR should do more to close the feedback loop and involve persons of concern more substantively in decision-making. Recognizing the challenges in promoting meaningful participation that manages expectations and is not resource intensive, **UNHCR should systematize efforts to communicate back to refugees on what was done with their inputs by consistently and regularly integrating reviews and consultations on the results of the prior-year assessments concerning the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy, and what decisions were made on the basis of them and why, at the start of each annual participatory assessment.**

Recommendation 3 (results B and C)

68. To ensure that coordination more effectively and efficiently facilitates the response to the needs of internally displaced persons and refugees, **UNHCR should**

develop country-specific coordination strategies, outlining incorporation of regional coordination mechanisms and/or joint note provisions, where appropriate, and possibly including:

(a) The decision and rationale for separate or combined coordination structures;

(b) Strategies for clusters led or co-led by UNHCR that reflect global cluster norms and standards while responding to the realities of each context;

(c) Tailored national- and local-level terms of reference for refugee, cluster and sector coordinators;

(d) The appointment of an NGO co-lead for the protection cluster, as appropriate;

(e) Contribution to the formulation of humanitarian country team priorities with regard to internally displaced persons and subsequent consideration of those priorities in coordination;

(f) Plans for data collection and joint needs assessments.

(*Signed*) Heidi **Mendoza**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services
12 January 2017

Annex

Memorandum dated 5 April 2016 from the Policy Development and Evaluation Service of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees addressed to the Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) presents below the full text of comments received from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on its evaluation. This practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.

Comments of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on its evaluation

1. In response to your memorandum of 23 March 2016 addressed to High Commissioner Grandi on the programme evaluation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, I outline below the main observations of UNHCR on the formal draft evaluation report. Before doing so, I would like to record the satisfaction of UNHCR with the willingness of the OIOS evaluation team to engage in an open and constructive dialogue with both our headquarters- and field-based colleagues throughout the process. This has contributed significantly to the insights generated during the evaluation and to the quality of the draft report.

2. As has been widely recognized in recent years, the humanitarian system has come under considerable pressure. The substantial increase in the number of forcibly displaced persons, both refugees and internally displaced persons, many of them caught in protracted situations, has presented a sharp challenge for the international community. The provision of protection and assistance has often been constrained by issues of rising insecurity, violence and restricted access to affected populations. Notwithstanding the substantial increase in funding overall, financial resources have not kept pace with the level of global humanitarian needs.

3. The forthcoming World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul will consider a range of policy, technical and financial issues that may influence the direction of travel for humanitarian agencies in the future as they strive to meet the overall needs of affected populations more effectively. From that perspective, the draft evaluation report provides a timely reflection on the important question of the different responsibilities of UNHCR for refugees and internally displaced persons in particular.

4. By and large, UNHCR considers that the draft report has captured well the main operational implications of the organization's engagement with refugees under its mandate and how they differ from those implications which are applicable to internally displaced persons as part of the inter-agency effort developed in the context of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator. It is pleased that the draft report has recognized the

efforts of UNHCR not only in responding successfully to the increase in the number of refugees requiring protection and assistance but also in largely upholding its specific responsibilities for internally displaced persons. UNHCR is further satisfied with the conclusion that meeting these dual obligations has not resulted in any observable negative consequences for either refugees or internally displaced persons. UNHCR notes that the report makes references to the measures taken in cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, most prominently the joint note, to clarify how leadership and coordination mechanisms in mixed settings should function in practice.

5. UNHCR acknowledges the need to improve its data collection, monitoring and coverage of out-of-camp refugees and to strive to further strengthen the consistency of its feedback and communications with refugee populations. It also recognizes that specific coordination modalities may be required for particular country contexts. As such, UNHCR accepts the three recommendations proposed by OIOS. It has set out its proposed actions in the accompanying matrix.

6. Further comments and observations have been embedded in the text of the draft report accompanying the present memorandum. These serve principally to highlight points that are insufficiently clear or for which further precision or elucidation is required. That these are neither numerous nor contentious testifies to the exemplary cooperation that has characterized the conduct of the present evaluation since its inception.

7. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your colleagues, in particular the evaluation focal points, for the excellent cooperation provided.

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Evaluation of the Office of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established in 1949 to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestine refugees. In its 2013 mandate renewal of UNRWA, the General Assembly affirmed the importance of the provision of services for the well-being, protection and human development of the Palestine refugees and for the stability of the region, pending the just resolution of the question of the Palestine refugees (see Assembly resolution 68/76, para. 3).

The present evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the promotion of a decent standard of living for Palestine refugees by UNRWA from 2010 to 2015, a period coinciding with the UNRWA medium-term strategy and the time since the previous OIOS evaluation. The human development goal of a decent standard of living was intended to unite the various departments and field offices around a shared vision for improving the lives of its target population. As UNRWA embarked on its 2016-2021 medium-term strategy, which envisions a similarly ambitious role for its protection focus, the evaluation was aimed at harnessing insights from the Agency's previous experience to help it chart a better-informed course in the years ahead.

Since the previous OIOS evaluation, the external challenges affecting the effectiveness and efficiency of UNRWA have further intensified: a political solution to the conflict underlying Palestine refugees' displacement seems even farther beyond reach; refugee numbers have grown rapidly while the resources have become less stable; and UNRWA human resources are no more flexible now than previously.

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Despite these challenges, UNRWA has continued to provide services — both in respect of a decent standard of living and in its other main areas of intervention, such as health and education.

Evidence of the effectiveness of these services in improving lives has been elusive, however. Although UNRWA has made gains in its monitoring and evaluation function, these functions are still underemphasized as tools to help UNRWA learn and improve. In the present evaluation, household and intercept surveys were conducted to offer a glimpse of outcome-level results, but this effort does not substitute for ongoing UNRWA-led monitoring and evaluation of results.

At a fundamental strategic level, UNRWA was unsuccessful in making the human development goal of a decent standard of living a platform for uniting the Agency around a shared vision for improving the lives of Palestine refugees. First, UNRWA failed to specify how all corners of the Agency would work together towards the achievement of a decent standard of living. Second, intended reforms of the key programmatic areas responsible for the implementation of a decent standard of living were never fully realized, in contrast to other programmes. Finally, a monitoring and evaluation framework by which to assess achievement of the shared goal of a decent standard of living, including outcome-level results data, was lacking.

Many of these gaps were identified in the previous OIOS evaluation, as they represent broader organizational shortcomings that extend beyond a decent standard of living, but some recommendations were not heeded. As UNRWA pivots towards protection as a similarly ambitious goal in its 2016-2021 medium-term strategy, it risks similar challenges if it continues to ignore these gaps.

OIOS makes two important recommendations, both of which UNRWA has accepted, namely that UNRWA:

- Strengthen its accountability framework
- Identify the appropriate level of resources necessary to fully meet its 2016-2021 medium-term performance targets, and document and regularly communicate the effects of any funding gaps to the Advisory Commission of the Agency and other key stakeholders.

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I. Introduction and objective

1. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) identified the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for evaluation on the basis of a risk assessment undertaken by the Office of Internal Oversight Services of OIOS to identify Secretariat programme evaluation priorities. The Committee for Programme and Coordination selected the evaluation for consideration at its fifty-seventh session, in 2017, and the General Assembly endorsed the selection in its resolution 70/8.

2. The general frame of reference for OIOS is set out in General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B, 54/244 and 59/272, as well as the Secretary-General's bulletin on the establishment of the Office (ST/SGB/273), which authorizes OIOS to initiate, carry out and report on any action that it considers necessary to fulfil its responsibilities. Evaluation by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS is provided for in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.[1] The evaluation has been conducted in conformity with the norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations system.[2]

3. The overall evaluation objective was to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the promotion of a decent standard of living for Palestine refugees by UNRWA. The topic emerged from a programme-level risk assessment described in the evaluation inception paper produced at the outset of the evaluation.[3]

4. UNRWA management comments were sought on the draft report and taken into account in the final report. The response of the Agency is included in the annex.

II. Background

History and mandate of the Agency

5. UNRWA was established in 1949 by General Assembly resolution 302 (IV), which mandated UNRWA to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestine refugees. In the 2013 triennial mandate renewal of UNRWA, the General Assembly affirmed the importance of the provision of services for the well-being, protection and human development of the Palestine refugees and for the stability of the region, pending the just resolution of the question of the Palestine refugees.[4]

6. At the creation of UNRWA, its mandate covered some 750,000 refugees. Since then, this population has grown to approximately 5.59 million in five fields of operation: Jordan (2,213,000), Gaza (1,349,000), the West Bank (942,000), Syrian Arab Republic (592,000) and Lebanon (493,000).[5] Today, nearly 30 per cent of Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA live in 58 refugee camps; the remainder

[1] See ST/SGB/2016/6, p. 16, regulation 7.1.
[2] United Nations Evaluation Group, 2005.
[3] IED-15-008 (available upon request).
[4] See General Assembly resolution 68/76, para. 3.
[5] "UNRWA in figures" (consulted on 12 May 2016).

live in non-camp settings. UNRWA schools, health centres and distribution centres are located in both setting types.

7. UNRWA is headed by a Commissioner-General, who reports directly to — and is ultimately accountable to — the General Assembly. The Advisory Commission, composed of representatives of the Agency's major donors and host authorities, provides advice and support to the Commissioner-General. UNRWA headquarters are located in Amman and Gaza. Five headquarters-based substantive departments set Agency priorities and policy direction: (a) Education, (b) Health, (c) Relief and social services, (4) Infrastructure and camp improvement and (5) Microfinance. Additional departments are responsible for support functions. The Agency's field offices in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the West Bank each operate in highly distinct contexts.

8. In the formulation of its 2010-2015 medium-term strategy, UNRWA identified four human development goals, around which it organized its programme of work (see table 1).[6] Aside from standard programming during relatively stable periods, UNRWA is mandated to provide humanitarian assistance, as far as practicable, on an emergency basis, and as a temporary measure.[7]

Table 1
Agency subprogrammes and human development goals, 2010-2015

Subprogramme/human development goal	*Organizational objective*	*Strategic objectives*
1. A long and healthy life	To protect, preserve and promote the health status of Palestine refugees	1. Ensure universal access to quality, comprehensive primary health care
		2. Protect and promote family health
		3. Prevent and control diseases
2. Acquired knowledge and skills	To meet the basic educational needs of Palestine refugees, in particular children and youth, and to improve their educational opportunities	4. Ensure universal access to and coverage of basic education
		5. Enhance education quality and outcomes against set standards
		6. Improve access to education opportunities for learners with special educational needs
3. A decent standard of living	To improve the standard of living of Palestine refugees through services provided to the poor and vulnerable	7. Reduce abject poverty
		8. Mitigate the effects of emergencies (both small-scale family and national crises) on individuals[a]
		9. Offer inclusive financial services and increased access to credit and savings facilities, especially for vulnerable groups such as women, youth and the poor
		10. Improve employability

[6] See footnote 3. Inception paper includes a programme impact pathway.
[7] See General Assembly resolution 69/87; originally mandated in resolution 2252 (ES-V).

Subprogramme/human development goal	*Organizational objective*	*Strategic objectives*
		11. Improve the urban environment through sustainable camp development and upgrading of substandard infrastructure and accommodation
4. Human rights enjoyed to the fullest	To safeguard and advance the rights of Palestine refugees	12. Ensure service delivery meets the protection needs of beneficiaries, including vulnerable groups
		13. Safeguard and advance the rights of Palestine refugees by promoting respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and international refugee law
		14. Strengthen refugee capacity to formulate and implement sustainable social services in their communities
		15. Ensure Palestine refugee registration and eligibility for UNRWA services are carried out in accordance with relevant international standards

Sources: A/65/6/Rev.1, A/67/6/Rev.1 and UNRWA Medium Term Strategy 2010-2015. Synthesized by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS.

Note: In A/65/6/Rev.1 and A/67/6/Rev.1, human development goals 3 and 4 fell under the same subprogramme.

[a] Present in the medium-term strategy but not in the headquarters implementation plans or field implementation plans from 2012 onwards.

Financial resources

9. As table 2 indicates, the vast majority (i.e., an average of 97.5 per cent) of the approximately $2 billion in biennial requirements of UNRWA came from extrabudgetary rather than regular budget resources.[8] Beyond the regular budget and extrabudgetary budget classification, in its day-to-day operations UNRWA classifies its budget according to three funding "portals": General Fund, Projects and Emergency.[9] Regular budget resources went entirely to the first portal, whereas extrabudgetary resources were distributed among all.

Table 2
Planned resource requirements of the Agency, 2010-2011 to 2014-2015

Resource requirements (thousands of United States dollars)

	2010-2011	*2012-2013*	*2014-2015*
Regular budget	48 629.9	50 346.1	51 083.5
Extrabudgetary	2 056 427.6	1 857 300.0	1 912 019.8
Total resource requirements	**2 105 057.5**	**1 907 646.1**	**1 963 023.3**

Sources: Proposed programme budgets for the bienniums 2010-2011, 2012-2013, 2014-2015. See A/64/6 (sect. 25), A/66/6 (sect. 26), A/68/6 (sect. 26). Synthesized by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS.

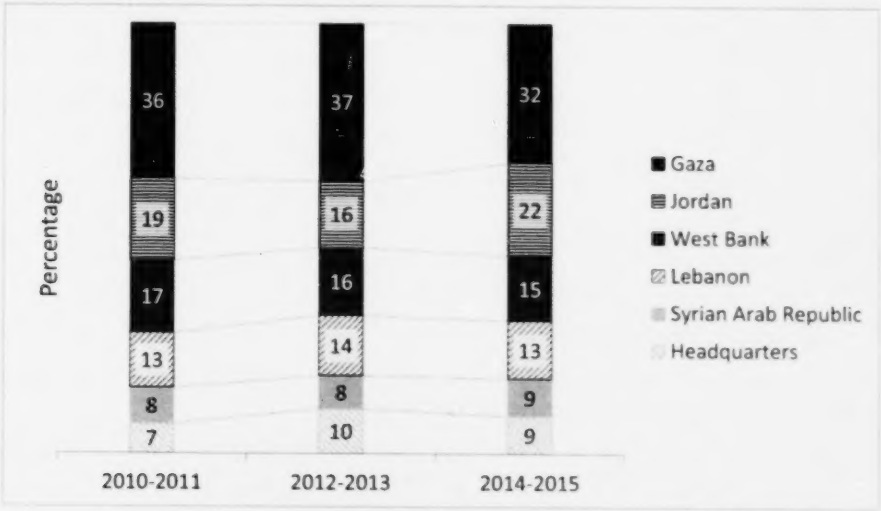
[8] A/64/6 (sect. 25), A/66/6 (sect. 26), A/68/6 (sect. 26).

[9] See, inter alia, "UNRWA Medium Term Strategy 2010-2015", para. 169.

10. Despite growing service delivery demands, the resources for service provision have declined in real terms. Factoring in inflation and the increase in registered refugees, real resources available per refugee declined 17 per cent between the 2010-2011 and 2014-2015 bienniums (from $424 to $351). For 2014-2015, the resources available per refugee, in real terms, for each field office were: Lebanon, $567; Gaza, $499; the West Bank, $386; the Syrian Arab Republic, $335; and Jordan, $206.

11. Figure I shows the apportionment of total planned resources among field offices and headquarters.

Figure I
Distribution of planned UNRWA resource requirements, by field office, 2010-2015



Source: Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, programme budget 2014-2015 (A/68/13/Add.1). Synthesized by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS.

III. Scope and methodology

12. In focusing on human development goal 3, a decent standard of living, the present evaluation report provides forward-looking insights to assist UNRWA, while undertaking a backward-looking assessment of its performance. The human development goal of a decent standard of living was intended to unite the Agency around a shared approach to integrated service delivery. As UNRWA embarks on the implementation of its medium-term strategy 2016-2021, the potential exists to learn from its experience of planning for and implementing a decent standard of living in ways that might inform its approach to protection, a similarly organization-wide initiative highlighted in the medium-term strategy 2016-2021.

13. Although emphasizing the human development goal of a decent standard of living, the evaluation also undertook a brief but systematic synthesis of the Agency's performance on health and education (see paras. 59-64). Human rights work, although embedded in many service delivery functions, is not directly covered in the present evaluation report.

14. The evaluation relied on a mixed-method approach. All evaluation results were based on triangulation of the following data sources:

(a) A desk review of over 50 selected documents, including policy and strategy documents, monitoring reports and external documents, such as statistical reports and socioeconomic surveys;

(b) Field missions in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank, which entailed: direct observations of service delivery sites (28); semi-structured interviews and focus groups with refugees (14), management and staff (99), United Nations and non-United Nations partners (12), host authorities (9) and donors and other Member States (2);[10]

(c) Remotely conducted semi-structured interviews with UNRWA staff and United Nations partners in the Syrian Arab Republic (17);

(d) Household and intercept surveys of 381 refugees receiving services in respect of a decent standard of living, administered by local research teams:[11] the sample included 272 randomly selected respondents — 215 households designated as "abject poor" and 57 others — as well as 40 community centre users, 39 technical and vocational education and training users and 30 microfinance recipients;

(e) Self-administered web-based survey of 4,766 UNRWA staff;[12]

(f) Analysis of UNRWA monitoring data, including the results-based monitoring system and other key performance data;

(g) Meta-evaluation of 42 evaluation reports, including those directly related to the focus of the evaluation on a decent standard of living (25) and those outside the evaluation scope, i.e., education and health (17).

15. The evaluation encountered two main limitations: the scarcity of reliable UNRWA-generated data on results in respect of a decent standard of living; and the low response rate to the staff survey. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS addressed the first limitation by constructing a composite portrait of overall results through the other methods described above. It addressed the second limitation by undertaking a demographic analysis of survey respondents, which indicated an acceptable level of representativeness.

[10] Many interviews involved more than one participant.

[11] 103 refugees in Lebanon, 100 in Jordan, 100 in Gaza and 78 in the West Bank.

[12] Survey sent to those with valid e-mail addresses, or 15.3 per cent of total staff (23.0 per cent response rate).

IV. Evaluation results

A. Within an increasingly challenging operating environment, available evidence points to mixed effectiveness in the Agency's promotion of a decent standard of living

16. Since the previous evaluation of UNRWA (2010) by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS, the manifold external constraints facing UNRWA have worsened. On top of the overarching geopolitical conflict that led to its establishment, recurring conflict affected all five field offices. Additional factors include: the denial of refugees' rights; divergent policies among individual donor countries and host authorities; and demographic shifts in the refugee population. In addition, the work of UNRWA has been affected by persistent resource instability and shortfalls stemming from heavy reliance on extrabudgetary funding. UNRWA has worked within these constraints to respond to a large, rapidly expanding level of need, this despite the lack of a political settlement to the 65-year conflict.[13]

17. The following sections underline the inadequate state of UNRWA data as a knowledge source for the Agency — whether to assess the needs of its target population in specific programmatic areas, gauge progress in achieving targeted objectives or measure the ultimate results of UNRWA interventions in the lives of refugees. These data gaps persisted, despite being highlighted in the 2010 evaluation by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS.

18. There is nonetheless evidence that UNRWA has demonstrated mixed effectiveness in achieving the strategic objectives of the human development goal of a decent standard of living defined in table 1. Importantly, because the medium-term strategy did not define performance targets, and the targets defined in headquarters implementation plans, field implementation plans and the results-based monitoring system were changed each biennium, indicator analysis by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS focuses on variations between years.

Reduce abject poverty: the Agency used its finite resources to help reduce poverty, but its coverage has declined and its contributions to actual poverty reduction are uncertain

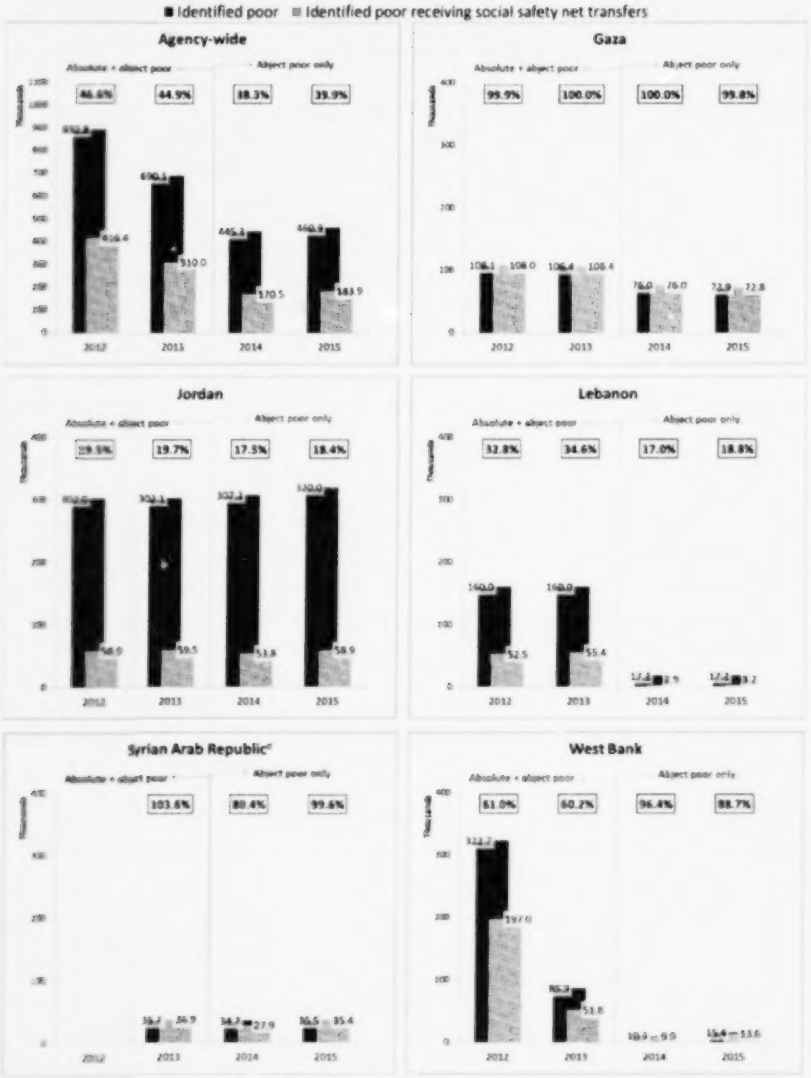
19. UNRWA has deployed direct interventions to reduce poverty, mainly through its social safety net programme,[14] which is intended to help poor refugees meet basic consumption needs by providing them with cash or in-kind assistance (i.e., food packages). The population of UNRWA-targeted poor shifted during the years covered by the evaluation. In figure II, therefore, it is important to note that: (a) the non-poor are defined as being able to meet their essential food and non-food needs; (b) the absolute poor are able to meet their most basic food needs, but unable to meet other essential needs such as clothing and transportation; and (c) the abject poor do not have the means to meet even their most basic food needs. The abject poverty line is the minimum income level necessary to cover basic food needs.

[13] A/65/6/Rev.1, programme 21, subprogramme 3; A/67/6/Rev.1, programme 22, subprogramme 3. See also the preambles to General Assembly resolutions 65/100, 66/74, 67/116, 68/78, 69/88 and 70/85.

[14] Formerly Special Hardship Case programme.

Figure II

Numbers (in thousands) and percentages of refugees identified as poor receiving social safety net transfers, 2012-2015[15]



Source: UNRWA results-based monitoring (Agency view reports), UNRWA Department of Relief and Social Services (data provided on 4 July 2016). Synthesized by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS.

Notes: No equivalent indicator for 2010-2011. Empty columns: UNRWA data unavailable. Numbers measured annually for 2012-2013 and represent quarterly averages for 2014-2015.

[a] In the Syrian Arab Republic, the poverty line is estimated, as a poverty assessment has not been conducted.

[15] 2012-2013 indcator: percentage of Palestine refugees identified as poor receiving social transfer from UNRWA;2014-2015 indicator: percentage of identified abject poor refugees receiving social safety nd programme social transfer.

20. As figure II indicates, at the agency-wide level, UNRWA was able to deliver assistance to 39.9 per cent of abject poor refugees identified in 2015. This means that 55.8 per cent fewer refugees were receiving social safety net transfers as compared with 2012, when the absolute poor could also be benefited (see paras. 19 and 39-40). Reductions were concentrated in Lebanon and the West Bank, where overall poverty is high, but abject poverty is low.

21. Targeting social safety net transfers did not always translate into lifting the identified population out of abject poverty, however. As table 3 indicates, the extent of the abject poverty line relieved by UNRWA social safety net transfers, taking into account cash aid and local market values of food baskets, varied considerably. [16]

Table 3
Percentage of abject poverty line covered through UNRWA social transfer intervention, 2011-2015[17]
(Percentages)

	Baseline (2011)	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*
Gaza	42.0	37.9	73.4	22.2	24.6
Jordan	25.0	25.8	26.9	30.9	42.0
Lebanon	14.9	15.3	16.5	20.9	18.5
Syrian Arab Republic[a]	43.0	NC	56.0	113.6	40.6
West Bank	33.3	21.5	28.6	36.1	32.9
Agency-wide	**30.3**	**22.9**	**NC**	**41.8**	**31.5**

Source: UNRWA results-based monitoring (FIP and Agency view reports). Synthesized by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS.
Notes: No equivalent indicator for 2009-2010.
Abbreviation: NC, data not collected by UNRWA.
[a] In the Syrian Arab Republic, the poverty line is estimated, as a poverty assessment has not been conducted.

22. Refugee feedback on social safety net transfers is mixed. Among surveyed households receiving UNRWA social safety net food benefits, approximately 51 per cent reported being very or somewhat frequently satisfied with the type, amount and quality of food they received. Eighty-five per cent of food assistance recipients reported staff to be very or somewhat helpful during the food distribution process. Fifty-four per cent responded that they understood how UNRWA calculated the amount of cash assistance they received, and 54 per cent said that they had received the amount expected. Seventy-one per cent of food recipients and 41 per cent of

[16] UNRWA, "Harmonized results report 2014", p. 22. See also: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, World Food Programme, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and UNRWA, "Socio-economic and food security survey — West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestine" (2012); and Syrian Centre for Policy Research, UNRWA and United Nations Development Programme, "Alienation and violence: impact of Syria crisis report 2014" (March 2015).
[17] Baseline and 2012-2013 indicator: "percentage of abject poverty gap bridged, on average, through UNRWA's social transfer during the quarter"; 2014-2015 indicator: "percentage of abject poverty line covered, on average, through UNRWA's social transfer during the quarter". The Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS considered these comparable.

cash recipients said that the assistance had very much or somewhat improved their households' living circumstances.

23. Fifty-three per cent of UNRWA staff survey respondents, on the other hand, said that UNRWA was very or somewhat effective in reducing poverty amongst Palestinian refugees, while 47 per cent indicated that UNRWA was somewhat or very ineffective.

24. Taken together, these data suggest that UNRWA provided important assistance to offset poverty among abject poor refugees receiving social safety net transfers. However, given the limited overall coverage of the identified poor, its contribution to reduction in the overall poverty levels among all refugees is correspondingly limited. Data on overall abject poverty reduction and the UNRWA contribution thereto, were not collected in the current UNRWA results-based monitoring system.

Improve employability: employment rates for graduates of UNRWA technical and vocational education and training programmes showed some declines between 2010 and 2015; geopolitical circumstances limited refugees' employment opportunities

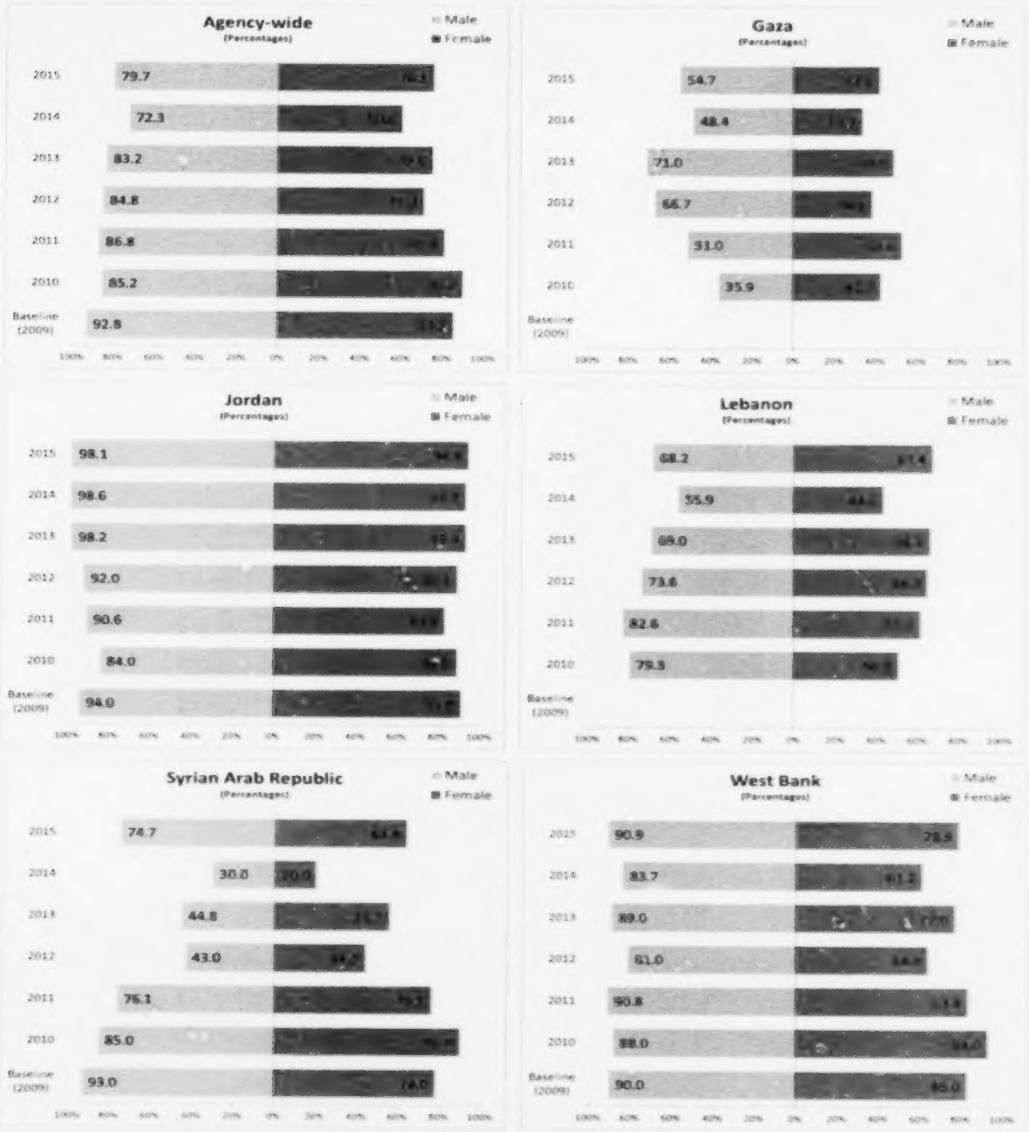
25. Within a broader context characterized by high unemployment, especially among youth,[18] UNRWA has mounted considerable efforts to provide refugees with technical and vocational education and training, and to place graduates in the job market. Figure III illustrates the employment rates for such graduates for 2010-2015.[19]

[18] Unemployment rate estimates for 15-24-year-olds: 33.4 per cent (Jordan), 39.8 per cent (Gaza and the West Bank combined), 21.6 per cent (Lebanon), 28.5 per cent (Syrian Arab Republic). *Source*: International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT.

[19] While agency-wide figures fall short of the 2009 baseline in results-based monitoring figures, they exceed the 2006-2007 medium-term strategy baseline established in 2010-2015.

Figure III

Percentage of technical and vocational education and training graduates employed or continuing studies one year after graduation, 2010-2015



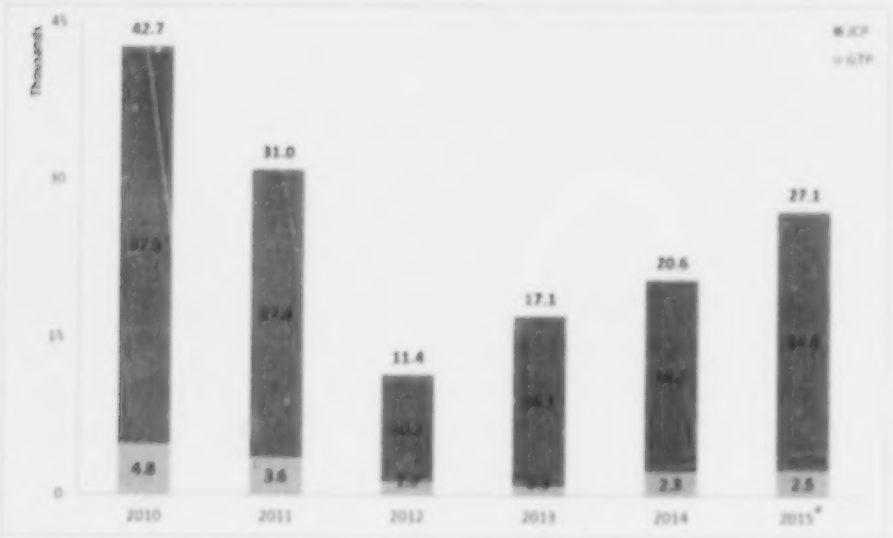
Source: UNRWA results-based monitoring (field implementation plans and Agency view reports) (for agency-wide 2012-2015, Gaza and Lebanon 2010, Syrian Arab Republic for 2013 and 2015, data were provided by UNRWA on 13 June 2016). Synthesized by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS.

Notes: Included active job seekers only. Empty lines: UNRWA data unavailable. Numbers are for graduates from previous academic year. Graduates from 2014 (2015 data) amount to: agency-wide, 2,293 male, 1575 female; Gaza, 544 male, 213 female; Jordan, 704 male, 590 female; Lebanon, 379 male, 237 female; Syrian Arab Republic, 238 male, 134 female; West Bank, 428 male, 401 female.

26. Among those survey respondents who received UNRWA training, satisfaction was high: 85 per cent reported that they were satisfied with their experience, and 94 per cent reported that it would likely help them secure employment.

27. The UNRWA job creation programme, in Gaza and the West Bank, and the graduate training programme, in Gaza, provided short-term employment opportunities for some refugees. The number of contracts UNRWA awarded varied considerably (see figure IV).[20]

Figure IV
Number of job creation programmes and graduate training programme contracts (in thousands), 2010-2015



Source: UNRWA job creation programme progress report, August 2015. Synthesized by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS.

* As at August.

28. While the data for technical and vocational education and training and job creation programme/graduate training programme point to the employability of those participating in UNRWA interventions, they do not factor in the overall need for employability interventions, rendering it impossible to gauge the contribution of UNRWA to increasing overall employability across the entirety of its targeted population.

29. UNRWA staff also pointed to the mixed success of the objective: 51 per cent of survey respondents indicated that they thought UNRWA was very or somewhat effective in increasing employability and livelihoods between 2010 and 2015, while 49 per cent thought it somewhat or very ineffective.

[20] UNRWA asserts that such variation was partly owing to funding constraints.

Improve urban environment through sustainable camp development: In a context of recurrent destruction and long-standing displacement, the sustainability goal was overtaken by the need for recurrent maintenance

30. The priority associated with this goal was to improve substandard shelter, especially for the most adversely affected and vulnerable refugees. As table 4 indicates, agency-wide, the number of refugee families living in UNRWA-rehabilitated shelters (excluding emergency cases) peaked in 2014, at 1,344 families, driven mainly by rehabilitation work in Lebanon and the West Bank. In 2015, the agency-wide number was 1,040 families, which represented 3.75 times more than in 2010.

Table 4
Number of refugee families benefiting from shelter rehabilitation (excluding emergency cases), 2010-2015

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Gaza	0	166	55	203	0	308
Jordan	0	0	0	6	74	133
Lebanon	165	224	195	520	671	430
Syrian Arab Republic	56	40	66	0	0	0
West Bank	56	220	3	201	594	169
Total	**277**	**650**	**319**	**930**	**1 344**	**1 040**

Source: UNRWA Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Department (data provided on 2 May 2016).

31. Among the shelter assistance recipients surveyed, 82 per cent reported that they received all or some of the shelter assistance they expected. Fifty-seven per cent reported that they were very or somewhat frequently satisfied with the responsiveness of UNRWA staff to questions about the shelter/housing process. Among those who received UNRWA shelter assistance, satisfaction was high, with 82 per cent reporting that this assistance helped improve their household circumstances very much or somewhat.

32. These achievements took place in a context in which most of the population receiving assistance lived either in host countries where they did not enjoy land ownership rights (e.g., Lebanon) or where wars led to recurrent re-building of demolished or damaged structures (e.g., Gaza, Syrian Arab Republic). Moreover, as with employability interventions, since needs assessment data were not available for the entirety of Palestine refugees, the achievements above do not indicate the extent to which UNRWA assistance contributed to improving the lives of its target population as a whole.

Offer inclusive financial services: the number of loans increased, but the overall value of loans decreased; existing clients were positive about their experience

33. Expansion in the number and value of microfinance loans, and the diversification of microfinance clientele (with more female, young and poor

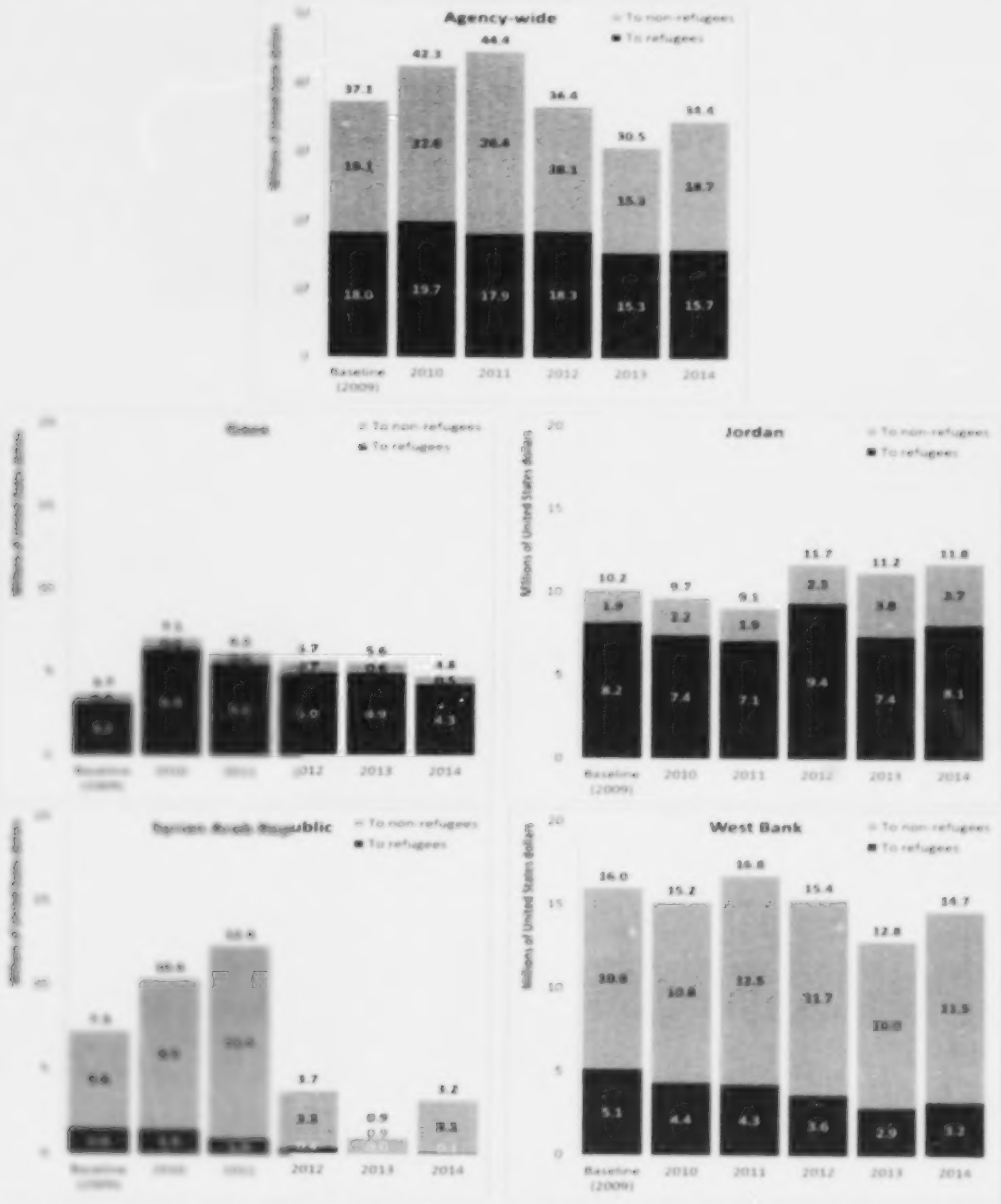
clients, have been strategies adopted by UNRWA to promote economic security and opportunity for marginalized groups. Additionally, microcredit targeted small businesses as a means to promote job creation. UNRWA also lends to non-refugees, to contribute to the financial sustainability of the programme.

34. The aggregate value of all UNRWA microfinance/microcredit loans declined from 2009 to 2015 agency-wide (see figure V), which can be explained by the economic and war-torn climate in the region. The value of loans to refugees decreased in all locations except Gaza. As figure VI indicates, credit was more thinly spread, as the number of loans disbursed to refugees agency-wide increased slightly over the period of the evaluation, owing to a larger number of loans to refugees in Gaza and Jordan. The number of non-refugee clients with UNRWA microfinance loans increased across all field offices. In 2010–2015, the programme opened more service branches and increased its outreach to young people and women.

Figure V

Value of UNRWA microfinance/microcredit loans to refugees and non-refugees, 2009-2014

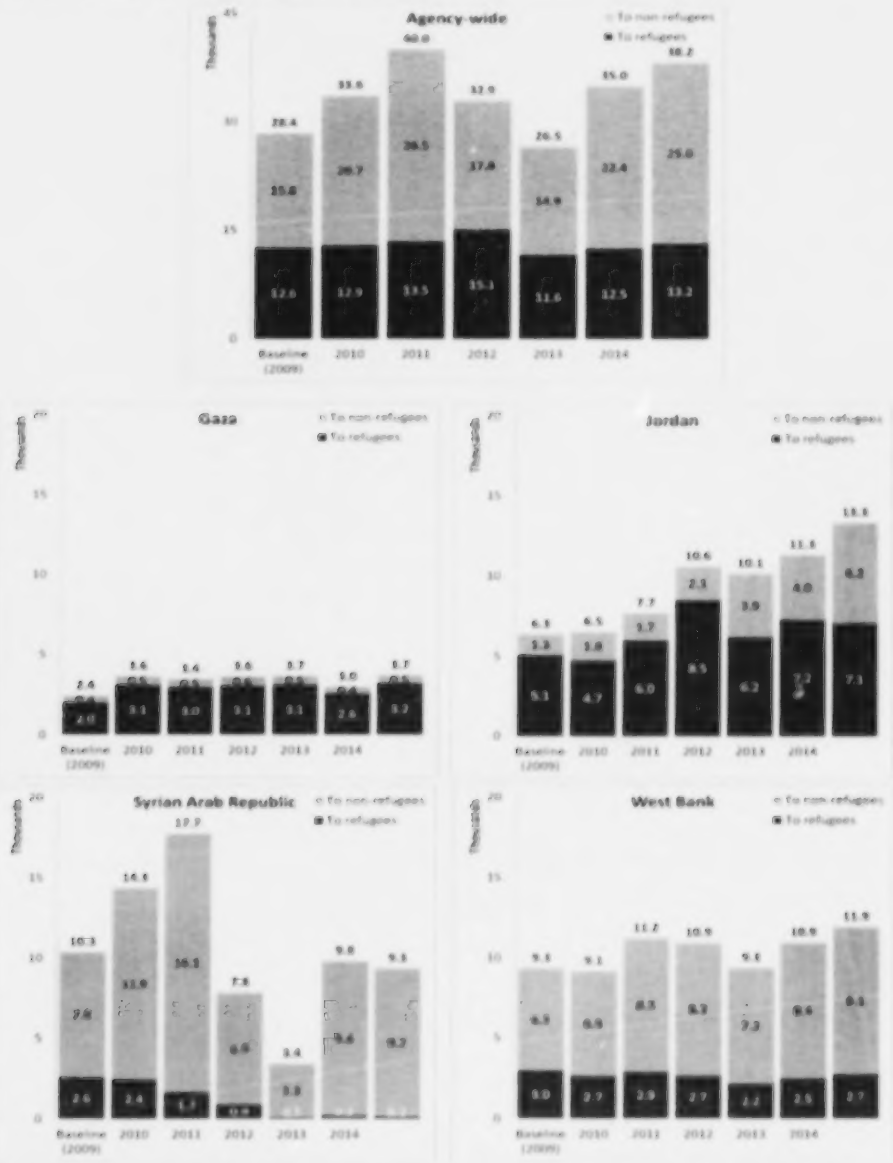
(Millions of United States dollars)



Source: UNRWA statistics bulletin 2008-2014, Agency view indicators 2015. Synthesized by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS.

Figure VI

Number of UNRWA microfinance/microcredit loans to refugees and non-refugees (in thousands), 2009-2014



Source: UNRWA statistics bulletin 2008-2014, Agency view indicators 2015. Synthesized by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS.

35. The respondents to the household survey by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS reported high satisfaction with multiple aspects of UNRWA loans.

Ninety per cent reported being very or somewhat satisfied with their loan process; 87 per cent reported they were very or somewhat frequently satisfied with the responsiveness of staff; and 83 per cent reported being very or somewhat clear as to how the loan was calculated. Of UNRWA loan recipients surveyed, 73 per cent reported that the loan had helped improve their living conditions somewhat or very much since 2014.

Overall, there is evidence of effectiveness in promoting a decent standard of living; however, the precarious operating environment has been a limiting factor and questions remain

36. Despite what has become an increasingly challenging operating environment, analyses by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS suggest signs of success in the Agency's delivery of services in intervention areas in respect of a decent standard of living. However, with regard to the overall effectiveness of UNRWA — its impact on the lives of its target population in line with its mandate to "provide services for the well-being, protection and human development of the Palestine refugees and for the stability of the region" — unanswered questions exist.

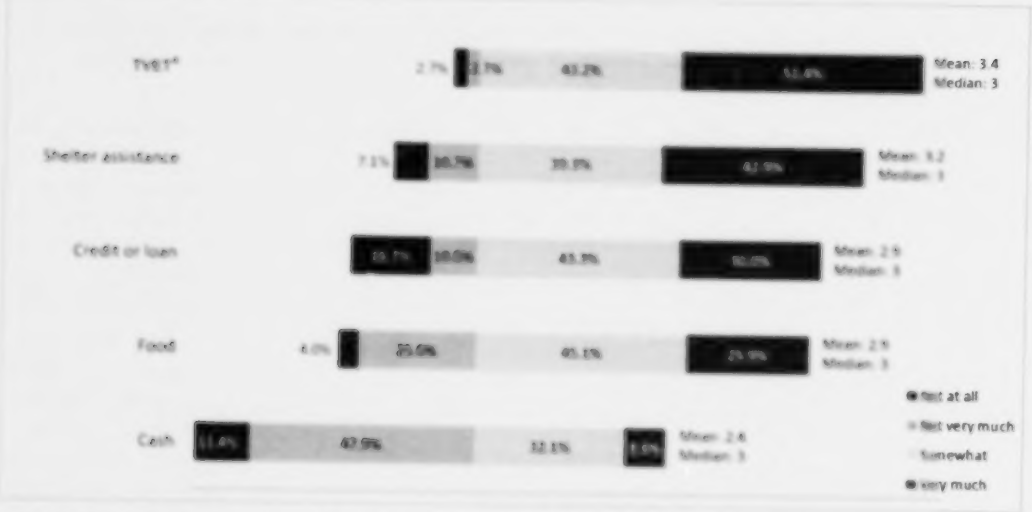
37. Figures VII-IX corroborate this mixed picture. When asked about the contribution UNRWA services had made towards improving their household circumstances since January 2014, the majority of recipients of the decent standard of living programme provided variable feedback. Technical and vocational education and training was rated most favourably and cash assistance least favourably; there was an average rating of "improved [my] circumstances somewhat" for most intervention areas. Meanwhile, UNRWA staff on average felt that work on a decent standard of living had become somewhat less effective from 2010 to 2015, with considerable variation from one intervention area to the next, as compared with other human development goal areas. The majority cited cutback in services, austerity measures and a failure on the part of UNRWA to meet the growing needs of the refugee population as the reasons for their effectiveness ranking.

Figure VII

Summary of UNRWA service recipient respondents' feedback on programme effectiveness

"To what extent did the UNRWA service improve your living circumstances between January 2014 and the present?"

(Percentages)



Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS, household survey.

Note: 4 = Very effective, 3 = Somewhat effective, 2 = Somewhat ineffective, 1 = Very ineffective.

n = 140 (cash); 224 (food); 28 (shelter); 37 (technical and vocational education and training); 30 (credit).

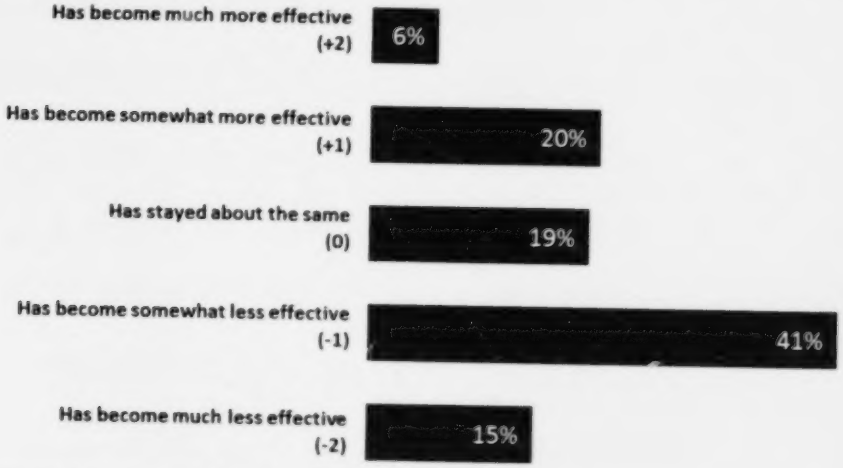
* Recipients of technical and vocational education and training were asked, "To what extent will the training you received help you secure employment in the future?"

Figure VIII

Staff perspectives on UNRWA effectiveness in promoting a decent standard of living

"Thinking about UNRWA's work to promote a decent standard of living for Palestine refugees, would you say that UNRWA has become more effective, less effective or stayed about the same as an agency over 2010-2015?"

(Percentages)

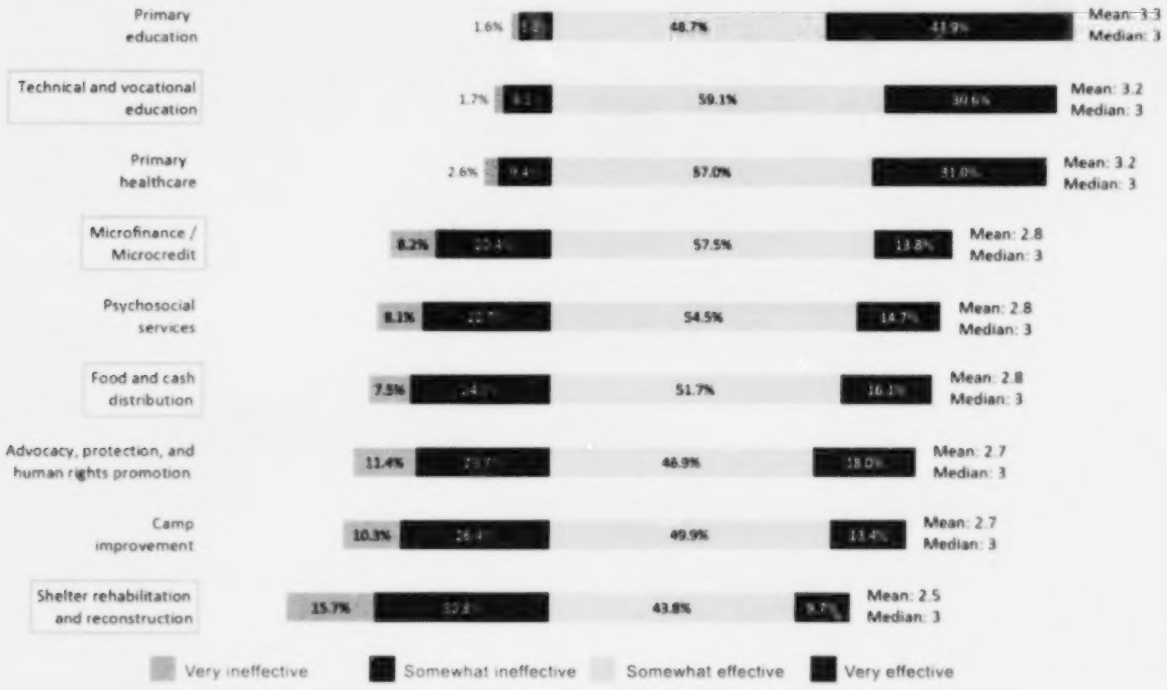


Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS, staff survey.
n = 755; mean = -0.38, median = -1.

Figure IX

Summary of staff feedback on the comparative effectiveness of UNRWA programmatic areas

"How effective would you say UNRWA has been in each of the following specific programmatic areas over 2010-2015?"



$694 \leq n \leq 775$ (valid responses for each item)

Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS, staff survey.

Note: 1 = Very ineffective, 2 = Somewhat ineffective, 3 = Somewhat effective, 4 = Very effective.

B. UNRWA has made limited strides in improving the relevance of its decent standard of living interventions, as intended reforms have not been fully realized

38. In 2010 UNRWA embarked on a series of programmatic reforms under the "Sustaining Change" initiative. Originating from broader organizational changes which occurred in 2006-2009, these reforms were slated for conclusion by 2012 and aimed at enhancing UNRWA programme effectiveness.[21] However, whereas reforms of health and education programmes have largely been implemented,[22] those envisioned for decent standard of living programmes (relief and social services, technical and vocational education and training, infrastructure and camp improvement, and microfinance) have been only partially carried out. A 2013

[21] A/66/13, para. 17.

[22] "Modern and efficient UNRWA Health Services — Family Health Team Approach" (July 2011), and "UNRWA Education Reform Strategy 2011-2015" (March 2011).

midterm evaluation of the medium-term strategy 2010-2015 indicated that relief and social services was not as advanced as other programme areas in assessing and setting out a broad-based reform. Meanwhile, official reports of the Commissioner-General for the period under evaluation repeatedly refer to the stalled reform process.[23]

Incomplete reform of relief and social services has yet to show effects

39. Given the growing refugee population and static UNRWA resources, reform of the relief and social services programme was intended to increase cost-effectiveness in poverty reduction, in particular by reducing abject poverty through improved coverage of the poorest refugees. This goal was to be achieved mainly by moving from a special hardship case model, where eligibility is based on refugee status, to the social safety net model, where eligibility is based on need, thus focusing limited resources on the abject poor, who are the most vulnerable. This change entailed the introduction of a proxy means test formula to determine eligibility according to poverty level. The shift was yet to be concluded in Gaza and the Syrian Arab Republic.[24]

40. UNRWA had also begun to change its delivery modality for such assistance, namely from in-kind (i.e., food) assistance to cash transfers in some fields. The regional situation demanded further location-specific analysis of unintended consequences of the food-to-cash transition. For example, interviewees pointed out that semi-closed or turbulent economies could suffer from inflation and price shocks or be affected by intermediate agents and smugglers. At the same time, there was some frustration among staff and refugees alike, with the continued use of food assistance. Some staff interviewees cited the long-standing reliance on sugar, flour and oil as being misaligned with the needs of a population suffering from an increased incidence of diabetes and hypertension, suggesting unintended consequences contrary to the promotion of a decent standard of living. During field visits, some refugees complained about the quality of food received, and the evaluation team observed food parcels that were clearly marked as not for sale being sold.

41. In the household survey, when asked if they would prefer alternative means of receiving food aid, 37 per cent of recipients reported that they would prefer to receive cash and 15 per cent reported that they would prefer to receive a voucher. Responses varied considerably by location (see figure X). Although some studies have suggested beneficiary apprehension towards cash transfers, including the possibility that women might have less control over cash than over food assistance,[25] Responses to the survey by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS did not differ significantly by gender.

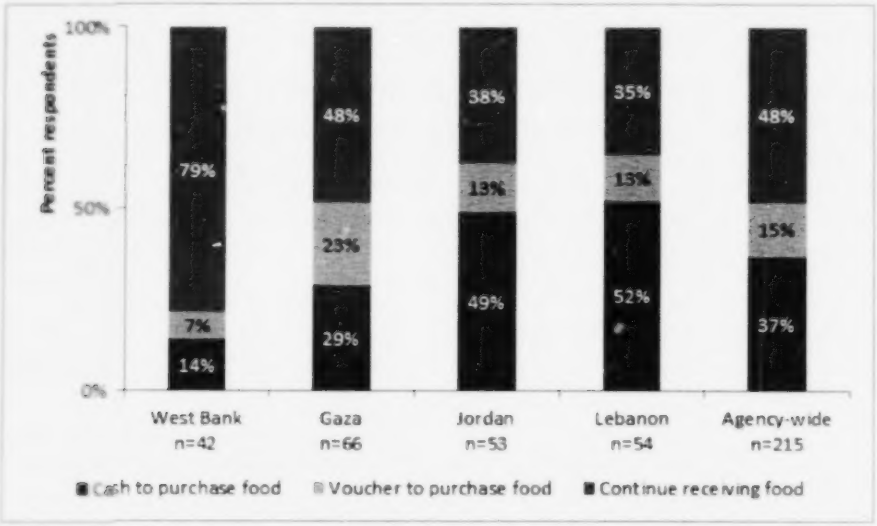
[23] See A/66/13, para. 49 (2010); A/67/13, p. v and para. 18 (2011); A/68/13, para. 15 (2012); A/69/13, paras. 18-21 (2013); A/70/13, para. 99 and p. 40 (2014). Consolidated 2015 information has not yet been issued.

[24] "Social safety net programme reforms were completed in Jordan, the West Bank and Lebanon, but UNRWA was unable to meet increased demands owing to funding and constraints" (see A/70/13, para. 99).

[25] De Jong, Tjitske; Aced, Miriam (2014). "UNRWA's 'traditional' programmes as a catalyst for human development".

Figure X

Refugee household preferences for cash, vouchers or continued food assistance



Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS, refugee household survey.

42. Another component of the Agency's poverty reduction strategy was to broaden its focus to include a more robust and effective attack on poverty through development programming, which "would empower people to climb out of poverty and leverage the strengths inherent in refugee communities".[26] There was no evidence that this component was operationalized in a significant manner.

Technical and vocational education and training innovations have been implemented, but labour market restrictions have constrained achievements in most fields

43. Improvements to technical and vocational education and training have constituted one of eight areas targeted in a larger education programme reform effort. UNRWA has introduced new courses in its technical and vocational education and training centres, established partnerships with the private sector, and prioritized access for vulnerable populations to such training. UNRWA has also strengthened career orientation and job placement initiatives. These activities were fruitful in locations where refugees have the right to work and the economy was functioning, such as Jordan. However, in other circumstances, labour market restrictions hampered the sustainability of the success of technical and vocational education and training (see paras. 25-29). In some emergency situations, refugees perceived the job creation programme as an important poverty alleviation lifeline. By design, however, the programme was never intended to be a sustainable solution to structural or long-term employability challenges, but rather to provide temporary relief.

[26] See A/67/13, para. 74.

New approaches devised for infrastructure and camp improvement have not been implemented

44. Camp improvement plans were created to integrate planning of multiple interventions — e.g., shelter rehabilitation, urban design and provision of health and education service facilities — taking into account complementary economic activities, with community mobilization and participation components. However, in 2010-2015, only 8 out of 58 possible plans were initiated, developed and/or implemented. Interviewees across the departments that need to work together effectively to develop plans expressed frustration, citing the absence of sufficiently aligned perceptions of respective roles and responsibilities. They also reported that the programme structure at headquarters had not been replicated in all field offices as planned. The programme has not completed the organizational transformation envisioned.

Envisioned changes to microfinance programme are pending

45. The microfinance programme has operated with some autonomy and has been financially self-sustainable. Since 2010 UNRWA has been considering options for the transformation of its microfinance programme as a means to make further contributions to poverty alleviation. At the time of the evaluation, however, this decision-making process was pending, purportedly owing to the need for UNRWA to address the relevant political, legal and financial considerations.[27]

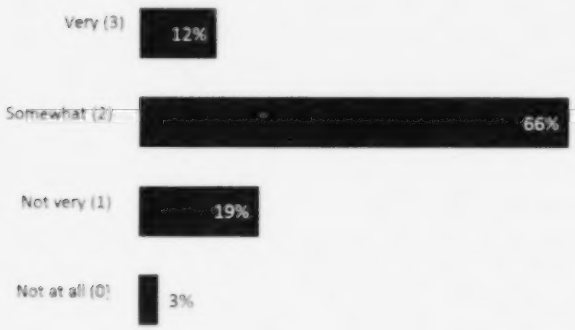
Overall, limited strides have been made in improving the relevance of the UNRWA work in respect of a decent standard of living

46. Faltering reforms of these key components in respect of a decent standard of living have limited possible improvements to the relevance of the interventions. These unfulfilled opportunities were reflected in staff perceptions (see figure XI). In open-ended comments, staff asserted that, for UNRWA to remain relevant, it must be attuned to the needs of the new generation of Palestine refugees, develop refugees' economically viable skills and improve their capacity-building. Refugees and other key informants interviewed echoed these claims.

[27] See A/69/13, para. 21.

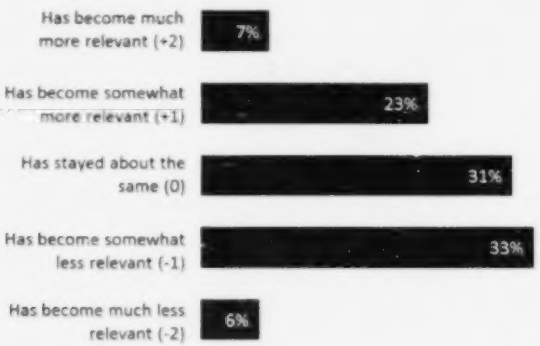
Figure XI
Summary of UNRWA staff feedback on the relevance of decent standard of living work

"Overall, how relevant would you say UNRWA has been in promoting a decent standard of living for Palestine refugees over 2010-2015?"



Percentage of respondents
n = 369; mean = 1.9, median = 2

"Thinking about UNRWA's work to promote a decent standard of living for Palestine refugees, would you say that UNRWA has become more relevant, less relevant or stayed about the same as an agency over 2010-2015?"



Percentage of respondents
n = 642; mean = -0.1, median = 0

Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS, Staff Survey.

C. Conceptualization and roll-out of the goal of a decent standard of living fell short of the envisioned ambition for it to unite the Agency around a shared integrated service delivery plan

47. At the outset of the medium-term strategy 2010-2015, UNRWA indicated that the goal of a decent standard of living, as a set of interrelated and mutually reinforcing interventions, would require an integrated response across the Agency, both horizontally (among relief and social services, education, infrastructure and camp improvement and microfinance) and vertically (between headquarters and field offices), to succeed.[28]

Although alignment in performance monitoring plans existed, a whole-agency, integrated approach to monitoring decent standard of living implementation did not occur

48. A review of UNRWA planning documents indicated strong integration between the performance monitoring plans of headquarters and field offices in respect of a decent standard of living. The four strategic objectives in respect of a decent standard of living in the 2010-2015 medium-term strategy were present in the

[28] 2010-2015 medium-term strategy, pp. 32-33; UNRWA Relief and Social Services Department, "Sustaining change", sects. 6 and 7 (November 2011).

Agency's strategic frameworks, and cascaded to the headquarters implementation plans and field implementation plans.[29]

49. Fuller conceptualization and roll-out of decent standard of living fell short of the envisioned integration plan, however. While performance planning documents existed, few elements beyond this level were in place to ensure a clear, shared and whole-agency approach to the implementation of the goal of a decent standard of living. Indicators to measure actual performance at the strategic objectives level, although identified in the medium-term strategy, were not replicated in the headquarters implementation plans or field implementation plans, nor were they collected in the results-based monitoring system; and indicators reported were at outcome and output levels only.

50. Additionally, despite the intention to leverage a decent standard of living to enhance integration across programmes, horizontal alignment of monitoring indicators among programmes was absent, and no cross-cutting programme indicator existed to measure, for example, the percentage of refugees with improved standards of living as a result of the collective work of UNRWA towards this goal. Concrete responsibility for each strategic objective in respect of a decent standard of living was assigned to a single programme only. Moreover, even though the two largest UNRWA programmes, health and education, conceptually play vital roles in contributing to a decent standard of living — something recognized repeatedly in staff interviews — UNRWA never articulated such roles.

51. Furthermore, although UNRWA established processes to monitor some of its progress against strategic objectives — such as midyear and annual results review meetings — monitoring in respect of a decent standard of living lacked sufficient follow-through. This limited the ability of UNRWA to gauge its progress, explore alternative ways of achieving as-yet-unmet decent standard of living objectives, and programmatically correct course as necessary. Table 5 illustrates these significant data gaps.

[29] The six-year medium-term strategy is operationalized in three biennial plans: headquarters implementation plans and field implementation plans. In 2010-2011, there were separate headquarters implementation plans for each service and programme department at Headquarters; after 2012, there have been single headquarters implementation plans.

Table 5
Strategic objectives in respect of a decent standard of living: performance data availability, 2010-2015

Decent standard of living objective	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*
Poverty reduction	All field offices + headquarters data missing	Not available	Complete	All field offices + headquarters data missing	Complete	Complete
Employability	Lebanon, Gaza data missing	Lebanon, Gaza data missing	Complete	All field offices + headquarters data missing	Complete	Complete
Camp development	Gaza data missing	Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic data missing	Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic data missing	All field offices + headquarters data missing	Gaza, Syrian Arab Republic data missing	Lebanon data missing
Financial services	Complete	Complete	Complete	All field offices + headquarters data missing	Complete	Complete

Source: UNRWA Harmonized results reports, 2010-2015. Synthesized by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS.

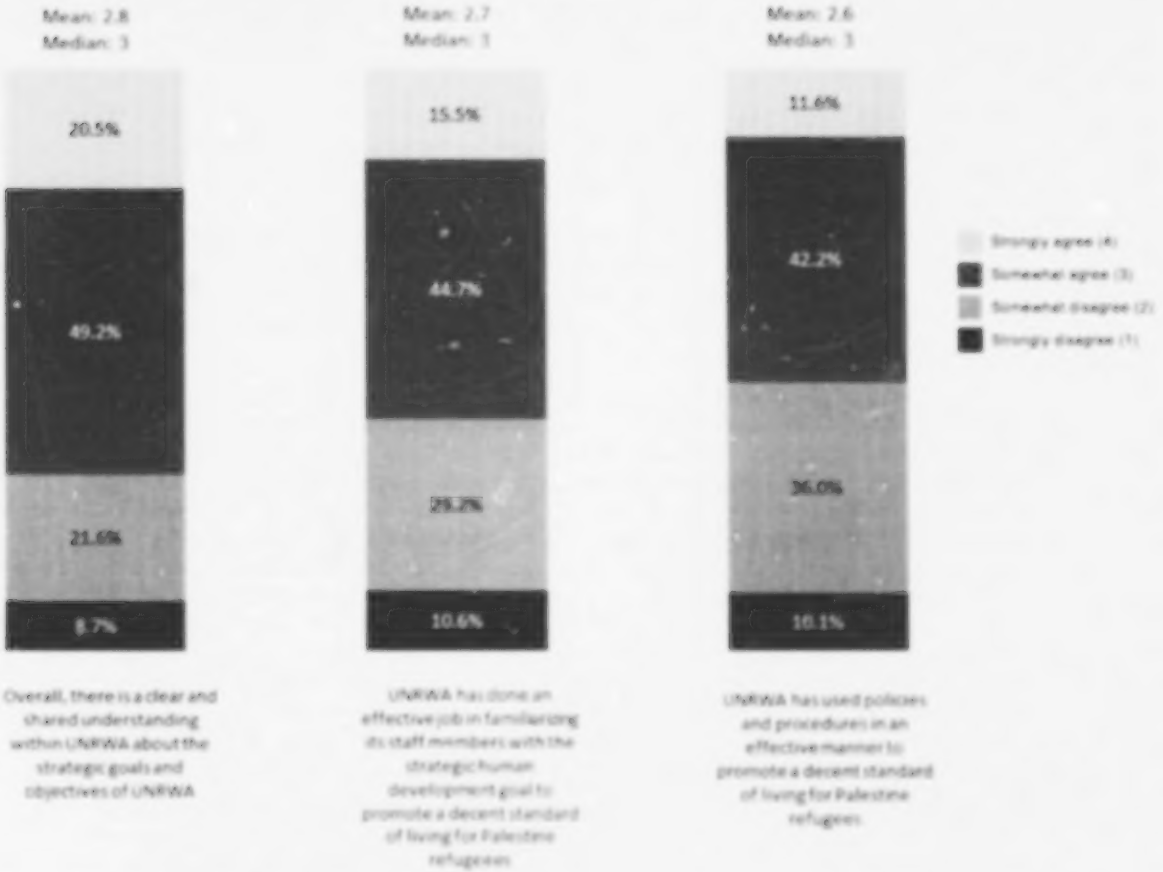
Staff members cite minimal shared understanding around the goal of a decent standard of living

52. According to staff interviewees, the foregoing factors reinforced existing programmatic silos, rather than incentivizing greater collaboration across the programmes. Interviewees stated that there was minimal shared understanding around the goal of a decent standard of living, with each programme working on its own interpretation of the goal — and little clarification from senior management.

53. Results from the staff survey corroborated this sentiment: staff were more aware that strategic goals existed than they were of policies crafted to implement them (see figure XII). In their comments, staff respondents cited a lack of clear communication, benchmarks and action on previous evaluations (see result D) as hampering their ability to meet objectives in respect of a decent standard of living. In its 2010 evaluation, the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS made six recommendations. The two that UNRWA did not implement called on the Agency to put in place its envisioned Agency accountability framework, and to devise more robust oversight arrangements.[30]

[30] See IED-09-008, recommendations 1 and 2.

Figure XII
Staff perspectives on the work on UNRWA from 2010-2015


Mean: 2.8
Median: 3
20.5%
49.2%
21.6%
8.7%
Overall, there is a clear and shared understanding within UNRWA about the strategic goals and objectives of UNRWA
Mean: 2.7
Median: 3
15.5%
44.7%
29.2%
10.6%
UNRWA has done an effective job in familiarizing its staff members with the strategic human development goal to promote a decent standard of living for Palestine refugees
Mean: 2.6
Median: 3
11.6%
42.2%
36.0%
10.1%
UNRWA has used policies and procedures in an effective manner to promote a decent standard of living for Palestine refugees
Strongly agree (4)
Somewhat agree (3)
Somewhat disagree (2)
Strongly disagree (1)

Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS, staff survey.

54. One possible explanation for the Agency's inability to unite around a shared integrated service delivery plan, as cited by interviewees, is that UNRWA had no "owner" or "lead department" coordinating the effort or other formal mechanisms for integration. Two potential loci of integration of services provided under the decent standard of living human development goal — namely the social worker role[31] and camp improvement plans[32] — were cited as not being fully utilized. Two of the platforms suggested by interviewees for additional programmatic cooperation included ongoing information system implementation meetings and regular interdepartmental meetings.

[31] See "UNRWA Medium Term Strategy 2010-2015", paras. 85, 89 and 103, and UNRWA, Relief and Social Services Department, "Sustaining change", pp. 47-44 (November 2011).
[32] Cf. result B

55. Refugee perceptions on the degree of integration in decent standard of living service delivery varied across field offices. While 61 per cent of household respondents across the four field offices surveyed maintained that UNRWA had been effective at providing its various services in a complementary way, these percentages varied: Gaza (76); the West Bank (65); Lebanon (57); and Jordan (49).

D. Internal and external inefficiencies have hampered the Agency's performance, with implications for its shift from a decent standard of living to a protection focus

56. As in the 2010 evaluation by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS, external factors continued to constrain the Agency's efficiency during the period reviewed, including: movement and accessibility challenges; sporadic violence; insufficient and unpredictable resources; and rigidities in the ability to hire, manage and reallocate staff.

57. Internal sources of inefficiency persisted as well. Monitoring and evaluation continued to be inadequate. First, an assessment of outcome-level results was hampered by insufficient monitoring. (See result A). Second, robust programme evaluation was lacking. Although UNRWA made strides in improving its evaluation function — a key source of organizational knowledge — this function remained weak. A 2015 peer review by the United Nations Evaluation Group[37] corroborated this assessment, pointing to persistent challenges (e.g., variable evaluation quality, low investment in evaluation, unreceptive organizational culture) amid gradual improvements (e.g., improved evaluation policy featuring enhanced independence, increased evaluation activity, growth of an evaluation infrastructure including guidance and trainings, and a recommendation tracking system). This peer review corroborated the issues raised in the 2012-2013 evaluation scorecard report on UNRWA by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS,[38] and in the present evaluation, wherein evaluation reports were determined to be of variable quality.

58. Another source of internal inefficiency was structural in nature. In 2006, UNRWA embarked on a major reform process, the organizational development initiative, which, as a precursor to the 2010-2015 medium-term strategy, sought to strengthen UNRWA capacity in: programme management; human resources management; organizational processes and systems; and leadership and management. One major prong of this process was to decentralize and empower field offices, as front-line conduits of UNRWA services, to deliver assistance in more relevant, effective and efficient ways. However, staff interviewees reported that UNRWA subsequently reverted to a more centralized approach at least once, without clear delegation of authority at the field office level. Moreover, although in 2010 UNRWA was in the process of developing an accountability framework that would help articulate such roles and responsibilities, there was no evidence that it succeeded. Alongside the conceptual and implementation constraints surrounding decent standard of living (see result C), this structural challenge poses a potentially significant barrier to effective programme implementation as UNRWA shifts

[37] Professional peer review of the UNRWA evaluation function, 2015.

[38] United Nations Secretariat evaluation scorecards, 2012-2013. OIOS assignment No.: IED-15-009, 17 November 2015.

towards a protection focus — which, like a decent standard of living, is similarly framed as a shared Agency-wide endeavour — in the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy. The new medium-term strategy, while stating the intention that each field office would develop its own medium-term strategy implementation plan, does not stipulate the respective roles and responsibilities of headquarters and field offices.[35]

E. Meta-evaluation indicated that the Agency's health and education programmes had made noteworthy gains, but that their precise contribution to meeting overall needs was unknown, and their efficiency was affected by economic challenges

59. As indicated in paragraphs 8 and 50, health and education fell outside the goal of a decent standard of living. A meta-evaluation of 17 evaluations completed by UNRWA in 2010-2015 provided a snapshot of UNRWA performance in these areas (see para. 14 (g)). The meta-evaluation yielded a mixed picture of performance, one that is consistent with feedback from household surveys.

Health

60. The 2010-2015 human development goal 1 aligned with the UNRWA health programme. The meta-evaluation by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS indicated that UNRWA has achieved noteworthy successes in the provision of health care. It gradually increased the number of primary health-care facilities, such that, in 2013, Palestine refugees were noted as generally having adequate access to primary health care in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank. Access to maternal and child health improved as well: by 2013, 99.5 per cent of deliveries took place in hospitals and 99.6 per cent of 18-month-olds received boosters as part of the Expanded Programme of Immunization. These accessibility successes extended to particularly marginalized subpopulations.

61. More broadly, results data were mixed. While access and standards of primary health care were generally acceptable in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank, in 2013 a key indicator of quality — the number of daily consultations per doctor, which should be low in order to maximize doctor-patient time — was high. Moreover, while UNRWA achieved significant successes in reducing the prevalence of communicable diseases and in maternal and infant mortality, and in increasing life expectancy, significant mental health needs persisted,[36] and non-communicable diseases such as hypertension and diabetes increased.

62. The meta-evaluation likewise presented a mixed picture of efficiency. In a 2013 study, UNRWA generally compared favourably with host authorities on key measures of health sector efficiency, largely because UNRWA internalized costs rather than relying on contractors to provide services. In addition, aspects of procurement and supply chain management were undertaken efficiently. However, stock shortages were reported, owing primarily to inadequate budgets, delivery problems and manual rather than electronic inventory management. Procurement

[35] 2016-2021 medium-term strategy, annex 4: Operationalizing the strategy.

[36] In 2016 UNRWA began implementing a strategy for integrating mental health and psychosocial support services into its primary health facilities.

processes, meanwhile, were criticized for inadequate regulatory standards and in some cases for cost inefficiencies. UNRWA has taken a number of steps to address these complex dynamics. For example, it is currently implementing a joint procurement-health programme initiative, projected to reduce costs while increasing medical supply buffer stocks.

Education

63. The 2010-2015 human development goal 2 aligned with the UNRWA education programme. As of 2015, UNRWA provided education for 493,500 Palestinian children in 685 schools. Beyond this output level, the evaluations reviewed did not contain up-to-date information on education outcomes across all field offices. (On the other hand, UNRWA itself recorded noteworthy indicative examples of positive outcomes.) As with health, these and other educational achievements often brought UNRWA on par with, or better than, prevailing statistics for the non-refugee population.

64. Assessments of efficiency painted a similar picture to health. The UNRWA education programme regularly experienced significant budget deficits due to supply-side and demand-side dynamics. On the supply side, inflation, the challenging security context, and increasing salary rates have led to fast-rising costs of service provision. On the demand side, one evaluation warned that the needs of an increased number of refugees were not matched with available resources, thus affecting the availability and quality of education. While decreased class sizes have made for better learning environments, this approach has increased per-student costs.

V. Conclusion

65. Since the 2010 evaluation by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS, the manifold external challenges UNRWA faces have intensified. Despite these challenges, UNRWA has continued to provide services to Palestine refugees — both in its decent standard of living interventions and in health and education.

66. Beyond the level of output delivery, however, evidence of how UNRWA has improved the lives of Palestine refugees has been elusive. Fundamentally, UNRWA was not successful in making the human development goal of a decent standard of living a platform for uniting the Agency around a shared vision in this regard, for a variety of reasons, cited in the present report. Many of these gaps were addressed in the 2010 evaluation by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS, but remain outstanding. As UNRWA pivots towards a similarly ambitious goal in the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy, that of protection, it risks similar shortcomings if these gaps are not addressed.

VI. Recommendations

67. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS makes two important recommendations, both of which UNRWA has accepted. The Division notes that UNRWA, in its management response (see annex), claims that individual aspects of each recommendation were already under way at the time the evaluation report was

released. This implementation status was not revealed during the evaluation, including during the report review process, and the Division uncovered no evidence during its evaluation to indicate as much. The Division was therefore not in a position to determine whether the recommendations were implemented because of or independently of the present evaluation. In its semi-annual follow-up and in its three-year follow-up triennial review on the implementation of the present recommendations, the Division will endeavour to verify this claim.

Recommendation 1 (results A, C, D, E)

68. To strengthen its accountability framework, and achieve the goals envisioned in the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy as effectively and efficiently as possible, UNRWA should do the following (in line with its previous plan to establish an accountability framework):

(a) Clarify the roles and responsibilities, both horizontally and vertically, for the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy as a whole and for its specific objectives, including the department(s) bearing primary responsibility for each objective and the department(s) responsible for contributing to the achievement of each;

(b) Build on the headquarters implementation plans and field implementation plans and include the specific elements that will be utilized to enhance organization-wide programme planning and implementation, with particular attention to cross-cutting initiatives;

(c) Strengthen its results-based monitoring and evaluation functions by (1) establishing clear linkages in the results-based monitoring system between strategic goals of the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy, unit workplans and personal workplans (2) establishing consistent baseline data, performance targets, SMART[17] indicators and improved data availability (3) identifying risks such as unintended consequences and sustainability concerns, and (4) identifying mechanisms that will be used for internal monitoring of performance against the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy plan, including monitoring and evaluation feedback loops.

Indicators

69. Development and implementation of a more comprehensive accountability plan geared towards effective implementation of the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy including the following: related to (a) above, guidance issued by senior management on roles each Department will bear in relation to the achievement of each objective; related to (b) above, headquarters implementation plans and field implementation plans that include specific information on the elements which will be utilized to achieve planning and implementation of cross-cutting initiatives; and, related to (c) above, a results-based monitoring and evaluation framework that has been strengthened in the four ways identified.

[17] An acronym for "Specific, Measurable, Agreeable [or Attainable], Realistic and Time-bound", as expected for results-based management indicators (see, e.g., report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (A/63/268, para. 21)).

Recommendation 2 (result A)

70. Subsequent to the establishment of consistent results-based monitoring baseline data, performance targets, SMART indicators and improved data availability, UNRWA should:

(a) Identify the appropriate level of resources necessary to fully meet its 2016-2021 medium-term strategy performance targets in the population it is mandated to assist (at large), and among those most in need of its assistance;

(b) Document and regularly communicate effects of any funding gaps on the achievement of the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy objectives, as well as the relevant Sustainable Development Goals, to the Advisory Commission and other key stakeholders.

Indicators

71. Development and implementation of the following: related to (a) above, documentation on the appropriate level of resources necessary to fully meet its 2016-2021 medium-term strategy performance targets in the population it is mandated to assist; related to (b) above, documentation of communication provided to the Advisory Commission, and other key stakeholders, on effects of any funding gaps on the achievement of 2016-2021 medium-term strategy objectives, as well as the relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

Annex

UNRWA management response and recommendation action plan

The Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) presents the full text of comments received from UNRWA on the report of OIOS on its evaluation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. This practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.

UNRWA follow-up to the report by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of UNRWA, dated 8 July 2016

Towards strengthened accountability and achieving the appropriate level of resources

1. Thank you for the evaluation of UNRWA contained in the OIOS report dated 8 July 2016, with particular emphasis on the third human development goal set out in the Agency's previous medium-term strategy 2010-2015, namely the Agency's goal to help Palestine refugees achieve a decent standard of living. UNRWA has reviewed the OIOS report on the evaluation of UNRWA and appreciates its analysis and findings.

2. UNRWA appreciates that the OIOS report acknowledges, in the summary and at paragraph 65, that the external challenges affecting UNRWA have further intensified. This is indeed the case. In addition to the factors noted in the report — i.e., the lack of a political solution, increased refugee numbers, less stable resources to meet refugee needs, and staff management challenges — the instability and recurrent conflict in the external environment, which is beyond the control of UNRWA, must be emphasized. The armed conflict in Syria has entered its sixth year and has intensified, causing deepening humanitarian and protection needs. Lebanon and Jordan have generously offered sanctuary to over 1 million civilians fleeing the conflict in Syria, despite the substantial burdens this has placed on them. There have been two conflicts in Gaza in the recent period, compounded by a nine-year blockage, resulting in almost the entire population being dependent upon aid to meet basic needs. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, violence, access restrictions, demolitions, and other rights violations continue. Such a context of insecurity and instability impacts all five UNRWA areas of operations on a daily basis. Nonetheless, the Agency's role as a reliable service provider to Palestine refugees contributes a measure of dignity and stability in the areas in which it operates.

3. As you may recall, UNRWA management encouraged OIOS to evaluate human development goal no. 3 of the 2010-2015 medium-term strategy for many of the reasons now reflected in the OIOS report as Agency shortcomings. Among other things, UNRWA recognized weaknesses in its efforts to achieve human development

goal No. 3 and welcomed the opportunity to benefit from an OIOS evaluation of that Goal. UNRWA and its Advisory Commission specifically recognized the challenges associated with achievement of Goal No. 3 of the 2010-2015 medium-term strategy in the development of the new 2016-2021 medium-term strategy — a process that took place during the period of 2013 to 2015. Accordingly, the majority of the weaknesses identified in the OIOS report were addressed in the process of developing the Agency's new 2016-2021 medium-term strategy. In this regard, UNRWA asked that the OIOS report reflect some of the efforts made by UNRWA in tackling the shortcomings associated with implementation of Goal No. 3 of the 2010-2015 medium-term strategy. While we appreciate that the focus of the OIOS evaluation of UNRWA is on results achieved (or not achieved) against the 2010-2015 medium-term strategy, a more complete and comprehensive analysis would have emerged with the acknowledgement that UNRWA management recognized the challenges inherent in achieving Goal No. 3 of the 2010-2015 medium-term strategy and has already taken significant steps in the context of its new 2016-2021 medium-term strategy to address the very shortcomings identified in the OIOS report, against a context of increased insecurity and instability.

4. Firstly, the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy recognizes that realizing change at the level of human development for Palestine refugees will require concerted effort by all international actors — including host countries, donor countries, Israel (as the occupying power over two fields in which UNRWA operates), other international organizations and civil society. UNRWA cannot, through its programmes and operations alone, compete against the ever worsening environmental and external factors that are driving Palestine refugees further into poverty and unemployment. Poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity levels for Palestine refugees increased over the period of 2010 to 2015 primarily due to factors outside UNRWA control or influence. These factors include the continued occupation of the occupied Palestinian territory, the continuing blockade of Gaza, two conflicts in Gaza between 2010 and 2015, the ongoing war in Syria, and the continued deprivation of human rights of Palestine refugees in Lebanon. In the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy, UNRWA has opted not to repeat strategic objectives that it is unable meaningfully to influence. Instead, the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy has identified five strategic outcomes to which UNRWA is able to contribute — that is, where change can be attributed (at least in part) to the effectiveness of UNRWA programmes.

5. Second, over the last several years UNRWA has been addressing the observation that insufficient data exists concerning the human development of the overall Palestine refugee population. In this regard, UNRWA has been bridging the information/research gaps noted in the OIOS report. UNRWA has completed a human development study of Palestine refugees which draws upon recent studies conducted of the Palestine refugee population in each of its fields of operation. This work establishes a baseline on relevant indicators of the entire eligible population and further establishes a research agenda for the coming years that has the potential to influence strategic decision-making.

6. Third, UNRWA has improved its common monitoring matrix of performance indicators as part of the development of the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy. Monitoring systems, structures and processes have already been strengthened to

support the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy in those areas identified as weak in the OIOS report.

7. Fourth, embedded in the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy is an ambitious reform agenda for those subprogrammes that were identified in the 2010-2015 medium-term strategy as contributing to human development goal No. 3. Among other things, UNRWA is in the process of reforming its technical vocational education training, education science faculties and scholarships, to more effectively target vulnerable groups and to be more market-oriented. UNRWA is also reforming the Microfinance Programme to generate more microfinance opportunities. It has embarked on a number of innovative pilots including, for example, an information technology gateway project in Gaza that has the potential to create employment opportunities for talented youth, despite the ongoing blockade in Gaza. UNRWA is further using its Relief and Social Services Programme and Protection Programme to develop a better understanding of the factors that are driving increasing vulnerability amongst different cross-sections of the Palestine refugee population across its five Fields. This analysis will inform advocacy efforts and contribute to targeting methodologies and approaches in other UNRWA programmes.

8. Fifth, the Agency has strengthened its planning framework and structures to ensure that 2016-2021 medium-term strategy strategic objectives are reflected throughout its strategic plans and operational plans (which, together, replace the need for biennial headquarters implementation plans and field implementation plans referred to in the OIOS report). These strategic and operational plans are collectively owned by field offices, headquarters programme departments, and headquarter support departments. They are established in a highly consultative process, monitored throughout the period of implementation using common/ Agency-wide indicators, and reported on a biannual and annual basis. Greater alignment has already been achieved between programmatic and operational results, budgets, and management compacts. Results-based management and enterprise risk management systems, procedures and structures have further been established that ensure accountabilities are clear for achieving the strategic objectives set out in the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy.

9. Sixth, UNRWA has been working with other partners in host countries and in the broader developmental system, including the United Nations family, to establish strategic partnerships with organizations that are better placed to contribute to and accomplish the human development goals for Palestine refugees that UNRWA is not in a position to achieve alone.

10. With respect to a lack of clear communication, as noted in paragraph 53 of the OIOS report, UNRWA has already strengthened its internal communication with staff with generous support provided by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Since early 2015 UNRWA has reached out to staff through new targeted and innovative methods, including direct and social media engagements. In late 2015, UNRWA also established an Internal Communications Unit in the Executive Office, dedicated to enhancing two-way communication with staff and highlighting the Commissioner-General's commitment to transparent and active engagement with staff, including on sensitive issues.

11. In addition, UNRWA takes this opportunity to comment specifically on paragraph 10 of the OIOS report, which suggests that the level of financial support

to UNRWA operations has been declining relative to a number of factors listed therein. UNRWA would like to point out that the absolute support received from donors has been increasing in a difficult environment for humanitarian funding. However, this growth in its financial support has not kept pace with increasing refugee numbers and needs that result in both increasing demand for UNRWA services and increasing operating costs. Increased expenditure has also been necessitated by United Nations system-wide requirements and donor demands. The issue of funding is an important one that is recognized in the 2016-2021 medium-term strategy as one of the highest enterprise risks faced by the Agency. UNRWA recognizes that there are opportunities for it to become more cost-effective — and it is proactively addressing these opportunities through various programmatic and operational reforms — but in the absence of any real improvement in the external environment in which refugees live and in the enjoyment of their human rights, UNRWA cannot achieve its strategic objectives under the status quo. It requires, as a matter of priority and urgency, a greater injection of additional and sustainable funding so that mandated services to Palestine refugees are not put at risk, such as occurred in summer 2015, when there was a real risk to the opening of UNRWA schools for 500,000 Palestine refugee children. UNRWA is making every effort, with the assistance of the Advisory Commission, to respond to the structural nature of its financial challenges and to advocate for measures that will put the Agency on stable financial footing so that it may reliably serve Palestine refugees.

12. In closing, UNRWA affirms its commitment to improved efficiency and effectiveness in accordance with United Nations best practice. In its 2016-2021 medium-term strategy, UNRWA commits to establishing a stronger foundation of efficient and effective management through, inter alia, building an ambitious relationship and fundraising approach to maximize resources and strengthening management systems to maximize impact and effective response as well as to address some key sustainability challenges facing the Agency. To achieve a more stable financial footing, the Agency has engaged in important reforms, introduced stringent budget processes and controls, and approved a zero-growth budget for 2016, and it looks to donors and partners for essential accompanying and increased support.